

Dr. Satya Prakash Chawdhary on Astrology



Editor
A Well Wisher

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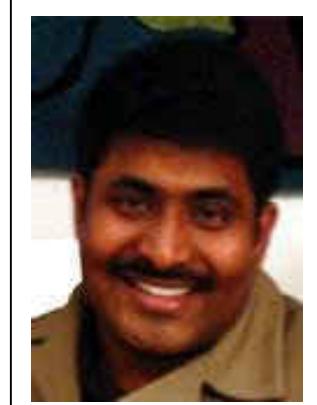
About

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Dr Satya Prakash Chowdhary is a dentist and health manager. He has studied for twelve years in the fields of native Indian medicine, Yoga, Prana Vidya, Vastu (Vedic Feng shui) and Jyotish (vedic astrology). He is a young and vibrant KP astrologer from Hyderabad, AP. He was appointed as SJC guru in July 2003, and was SJC guru possibly during 2003-2004 periods.

Website: <http://www.karmicrhythms.com/>

The Introduction given in his website reads – “Welcome to Dr. Satya Prakash Chowdhary's website. You will find articles related to Yoga & Buddhist psychology, Vedic systems of knowledge and healing such as Yoga, Ayurveda, Jyotish (astrology), Vedanta and other timeless wisdom traditions here. This site hosts new as well as updated versions of previously published articles (online articles elsewhere may at times be older versions). Please visit www.mindcareclinic.com for information about Dr. Satya Prakash's professional work/services as a mental health specialist and corporate coach.”



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Again from his website:

About the author: A graduate of the New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry's (Australia), multidisciplinary clinical masters degree in mental health, Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary has the unique advantage of a rare multi-disciplinary background and experience. He combines a unique blend of Mental Health/Behavioral sciences, Management and Ancient Wisdom backgrounds. His extensive studies (about 15 years of ongoing training/studies) in the medical model (both conventional and alternative), Counselling/Psychotherapy, Family & Organizational systems, Management and Spirituality, are complemented by practical experience gained through one-to-one interactions in both the clinical and corporate fields. Dr. Satya Prakash was past President of *The Australian Council of Vedic Astrology* (2001 to 2004) and also the editor of '**The Vedic Light**'. He runs the **MindCare Clinic and Institute of Behavioural Sciences** , at Hyderabad , India (www.mindcareclinic.com). The author may be contacted at: backtocosmicroots@yahoo.com.au

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Vedic-Astrology Yahoo Group Conversations

Against ‘Independent’ Analysis of D-Charts

[Editor: The following is an edited version of a message posted by Satya Prakash ji in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Jan, 2001]

Dr. Satya Prakash Chawdhary (To mahalinga_iyer):

I read your mails just now. I will briefly explain myself more clearly on certain points in my previous mail. You had quite a few questions. When I talked of a fragmented approach to the whole, or a mechanistic approach, I was addressing your point on “an INDEPENDENT analysis of a D-10 or D-24 or even D-7 (children) being simply impossible” and also the DKP factors. I didn’t mean to offend you and was addressing only those questions.

It was not in answer to your questions about charts where D-1, D-10 or even D-24 are identical. This question which you framed so brilliantly again in a later email is a different point. For that I had very briefly given my answer already. I will explain the same points more clearly here. Initially after a few years of learning astrology, I found myself asking exactly the same question. Those days in the evenings I used to assist a senior astrologer in computing the charts and even doing prasnas for him. He religiously used the divisional charts (he had studied with the late Sri Seshadri Iyer who re-popularized the divisional charts) which he insisted held the key to most questions. But soon I found myself asking the same question as you. Over the years I had been searching for an answer. I found two theories that came close.

1. Nadiamshas as used in the famous nadis.
2. Krishnamurthi subs or even sub subs.

Most nadi texts use the fine division called nadiamshas. A common division uses 150 such amshas. Again some nadis divide them into two halves, making the patterns 300. In other words a person born with any ascendant could belong to any of these 150 amshas or 300 ardha amshas. I tried to collect more on this. After more than 10 years I still don’t have information on more than half of them. B.V.Raman’s magazine dealt with a few in some issues under “As it strikes me” by Agastya. Another rich source was the private collection of a pundit in Varanasi. His father had an unbelievable collection which was taken by the government after his death. But later the son went to the court and reclaimed them back. Paul Brunton mentioned his name in a famous book of his. Anyway from my limited experience on the nadis, I currently believe that the patterns are roughly around 60-70% correct). When you find an amsha matching 60% and above and if this amsha is around your ascendant degree, you could assume that that is the exact amsha in which you were born. To see an example in print read K.N.Rao’s ‘Planets and Children’ in which he has appended the readings for his own amsha as given by B.V.Raman probably from the Dhruva nadi. This is an example of quite an accurate pattern. In my experience (which I again repeat is very limited in the Nadi area) I have seen an accuracy of 60% generally. Even the DKP factors(social and age backgrounds etc) find some mention in these amshas. But in all honesty only a few are mentioned. Even those differ between different

texts sometimes. Though it could be argued that it is possible to predict the DKP factors also it is only theoretical, atleast in the present age. Again in all honesty I don't think that the sages knew every bit of it. That they were far superior to us in their understanding, is undeniable. But that they were infallible, is another issue. Now coming to the issue of studying the scientific basis and methodology of astrology, let us keep aside the intuition side for a while and focus on the technique. Taking 150 amshas only, on the average of two hours per ascendant (the latitude being constant), we have a different amsha rising every 48 seconds. Taking the ardhaamshas, once in 24 seconds. In other words the patterns are given roughly for every 24 seconds for a place like Mumbai (this changes according to the latitude).

Now coming to the issue of KP, it is a matter of personal choice. Common reasons cited for discarding:

1. It is new
2. It uses some ideas from western astrology.

For a person with a scientific attitude both the reasons don't stand. Though Hindu astrology is very original, it is also true that it incorporated certain points from the Greeks and Moslems. There is nothing wrong in taking truth wherever it comes from. As for the point of KP being new, a careful study will show that it is not really that new either. Most principles and reasoning follow known principles of vedic astrology. The subs are also in the same manner as the vimshottari dasha. It is only an extension. Of course like any other human being Krishnamurthi is also not infallible. He is wrong in his comments on ashtakavarga or even the rishis. His Paddhathi is his methodology, what he selected from the vast ocean of astrological techniques. He is easier and quite accurate in the methodology. His ruling planet theory is the best, fastest way of giving dependable predictions that I have come across. Anyone who tries his RP sincerely will agree on this point. It is easy, simple, accurate and already exists in the minds of most astrologers though in a misty form. It is a different matter altogether if one wants to use ONLY conventional vedic methods or if one is searching for any scientific technique that works and can be incorporated without changing the general framework. I am not saying that the subs are the only answer or even that they answer everything. More research may be required. But they answer SOME questions better. The Ruling planet theory could be incorporated into any system of astrology (Indian or Western) easily as a reliable method. I have had a very high success rate with ruling planets as compared to other methods. Of course I can speak only for myself.

All this aside the fact remains that no astrologer (I am not talking of psychics) can predict without reference to the DKP factors. Theoretically we could say anything. Practically with the current level of knowledge it is not possible to definitely predict the exact career even with a knowledge of the DKP. But one can come reasonably around the field(s) in which one is involved and the probable level of attainment. And there is nothing wrong in taking useful information from any good source whether it is the chart or the client herself. Dont doctors take a clinical case history, part of which covers what is similiar to DKP?

The spiritual roots of astrology are undeniable as also the belief that one has to approach astrology with a spiritual attitude. But as a science, it has its techniques and methodologies too. I personally feel that it is useful not to get caught in the so called philosophical or spiritual arguments while talking of a technique. Otherwise one could easily get caught in an intellectual trap. Astrology as a sadhana is altogether a different matter. What we most often think of as "spiritual astrology" is one more mental trap. Astrological principles on the other hand can be separated from the interpretations as well as cultural ingrowths. I realized this when I had to teach vedic astrology to some westerners who initially had no inkling of Hinduism. Didn't the Greeks or Arabs do astrology with a different backdrop? It is the interpretations that require DKP. An independent analysis is difficult NOT because the CHART is

overridden by social conditions, but because the social conditions influence the INTERPRETATION. The PRINCIPLES of Jyotish remain the same. But the INTERPRETATIONS change according to the context. Every branch of human knowledge has to adapt itself to the changes and needs of the times. But the principles can be used anytime, anywhere. And ideally speaking astrology is one irrespective of where it comes from, just as any other science. Haven't people from all over the world contributed to modern medical science? All divisions are theoretical, only to make understanding easier.

These of course are *my* opinions. They are not meant to offend anyone. It is just a friendly exchange of ideas. If it helps someone, good. If it doesn't, just ignore them. All the best.

Karma the Eternal Mystery

[Editor: This is an article posted by Satya Prakash ji in vedic-astrology group in Jan, 2001]

As I grew up I started wondering about the purpose of life. Life brought with its myriad experiences, the inevitable experience of suffering too. Why do we suffer? Why are we born? Such questions plagued my mind for a long time. The sacred books and the wise men gave me a glimpse of the theory of karma and transmigration of the soul. It seemed very logical, yet I doubted it a lot. Then I started studying Jyotish or Hindu Astrology. But it took me years of hard work, some experience and sincere thinking to be convinced. When I started seeing the patterns in the horoscope manifesting in actual life, I had to accept the theory of Karma. Slowly it was no more a belief, but a fact. Karma means not only action, but also the result of an action. Whatever we are going through at the moment is the result of previous actions, not just of this life, but many lives. In short Karma is the sum total of our actions both in this life and in the preceding ones. Nothing happens by accident or chance actions. Everything happens in regular order, the past, present and the future being interconnected and interdependent. Cause is Effect concealed, and Effect is Cause revealed!

Now that brings us to the question of rebirth. Books written by Ian Stevenson, Hiroshi Motoyama, Moody and many other interesting cases strongly suggest that there is proof of rebirth. Every good astrologer himself is proof of Karma and rebirth! Let us examine the theory of Karma and rebirth. You will not cease to exist after death. It is the physical body that dies. The astral body (sukshma or linga sarira) and causal body (karana sarira) continue forth. The causal body has all your Karmas stored in it as seeds, seeds that result in rebirth. As long as man has not exhausted all his Karmas, he has to be born again. All our actions and thoughts become the seeds for our future lives. Karma is at the root of this cycle of births and deaths. Again and again Karma

makes us take birth. Countless times have we been born and countless times have we died. Very many wombs have we passed through.

RNANUBANDHANA

In each life, we have mother, father, brothers, sisters, spouse, children and so on. We are born in a family as a result of un-discharged debts of past lives. Constantly we are creating accounts, debiting and crediting. We are creating Karmic debts with all those with whom we interact. The Karmic debts (rna) lead to bondage or attachment (bandhana). These Karmic attachments pull us into the wheel of existence again and again. runanubandhana (the bond that results from Karma debts) is at the root of repeated lives. Karma leads to rna and rna leads to Karma. It works both ways. If you have given something to somebody in some life, the memory is stored in your causal body. That person will be your debtor in this birth. If you have taken in the past, it will be taken from you in some birth. The causal body stores the memory of all of one's runanubandhanas of countless births. Till all the karma stored in the causal body is burnt away or exhausted, there is no liberation from rebirth. Human life is nothing but a memory of runanubandhana, the story of the countless karmas that we make, and live through. Every relationship reflects some runanubandhana. The people with whom we have very strong Ruanubandhana become our parents, spouse, children and coborns in this life. The memory of Karmic debts may be sweet or bitter. Sweet memories of karmic debts lead to a 'happy' relationship and bitter memories to an 'unhappy' relationship. In reality most of the karmic debts are mixed, a mixture of sweet and bitter memories. That is why most relationships are of a mixed nature. I will try to explain briefly two kinds of relationships that are very important: parent/child and love/marriage relationships.

PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP

This relationship is the most important. This is the easiest way to discharge our karmic debts toward one another. Some possible ways in which it works:

- i. A person whom you have helped in some life is born as a child, takes good care of you in the present life and discharges his/her debt.
- ii. A person to whom you owe a lot in some life may be born as your son or daughter and take back what you owe. Such a child makes you spend heavily on her/him.
- iii. A person whom you cheated ruthlessly in a previous life is born as your child and gives you a lot of suffering, takes your money and goes away.
- iv. An enemy of some life is born as a son/daughter in this life, in which case, he/she behaves like an enemy, hates you and causes a lot of suffering to you. The spouse, the parents, siblings, friends, servants, all is born in a set up together as a result of runanubandhana.

SEX/LOVE/MARRIAGE

Two people can be mutually attracted to one another only if there was some relationship between them in some previous life. When you meet a person to whom you were related in a previous life, the stored memories or the runanubandhana stir up your emotions and you may start "feeling" for the person. In fact sex itself has rnanubandhana at its roots. In countless lives, we would have had sex with many people. Every longstanding relationship leads to certain deep impressions. Any act when done repeatedly can become a habit. Every habit leaves an impression. These impressions are the samskaras, which drive us to act again. That is why we get sexually attracted many times. But if we have no more debt (rna) with the other person, it just remains as a fleeting thought, as an impulse only. But if the runanubandhana is still there, the attraction results in a relationship. Sometimes even if the karmic debt is discharged, still the samskaras (impressions of past acts) drive us to sex. We eventually end up creating a fresh account, a further karmic debt that is not advisable. Somebody who was your mate in a previous life could have come back as your mother, sibling or father. That is how incest occurs! The previous samskaras stir up an over whelming urge to have sex again in this life. But the nature of the relationship, the purpose being different in this life, it only leads to fresh unwanted karma, which is not safe. In the majority of the sexual

attractions, it is only the samskaras and not the actual karmic debts (runa) that operate. But if there is any undischarged karmic debt, it results in a relationship of love. When the karmic accounts are settled, once there is no more debt, the relationship breaks suddenly. But if the runanubandhana is very strong, it results in a long-standing relationship like marriage.

This is the cause of every relationship, how it is born and how it ends. But nothing is permanent. No karmic debt can be everlasting. Eventually it has to end, when the debt is discharged, when the account is balanced. In this impermanent world change is the law of life. Countless wombs have we passed through. Innumerable mothers, fathers and wives have we been with. But when a karmic debt is over, the attachment might still be there. We still cling on. When rna (debt) is over, the relationship has to end. But anubandhana (bondage or attachment) might still make us cling to the person. Like the fan that turns for a while even after the power supply has been switched off, the attachment doesn't die for some time. Once the rna is over, nothing can sustain the relationship. Hence any further remnants of attachment (anubandhana) are bound to produce only suffering and misery. In some cases, one of the two people involved grows out of the relationship once the rna (debt) is discharged. But the other refuses to move on, due to the attachment (anubandhana). The second person suffers tremendously because any further attachment leads to misery and suffering only. Sometimes there is bitterness also after separation. This bitterness can sow the seeds for future karma! When the karmic debts are over, when a couple has to part ways, as far as possible, it should be done with the least negative feelings. They should part in an amicable way to avoid further seeds of new karma. Easier said than done.

The karma that brings two people together into marriage can also be of many types. I will mention a few below:

- i. Bitter enemies are born as husband and wife and always fight, criticize, deceive one another and make their lives miserable.
- ii. Two people who have created negative karma between them come back as man and wife and lead a life of suffering together, fighting with one another.
- iii. Two people who have created both positive and negative karma between them come back as man and wife and have a mixed life causing both happiness and unhappiness to one another.
- iv. Two people who have created positive karma between them in previous lives come back as man and wife and lead a relatively happy life.
- v. One who has taken a lot in some life has to give in the present life. In such a case, one of them will always be giving (money, love, care, etc.) and the other receiving.
- vi. Two souls who are evolving spiritually come as husband and wife, help each other in their evolution and benefit one another. This is the purpose of life.
- vii. A couple who has been husband and wife may come back as husband and wife again if their runanubandhana is very strong. If the runanubandhana is very strong and their destinies (lives) are so strongly interlinked, usually both die almost at the same time. If one dies first, generally the other also dies within a few days or weeks. The souls are so strongly identified with one another that towards the end of a successful married life, they behave as if they are one.
- viii. Sometimes (rarely) a very highly evolved being or soul, or spirit or even an avatar is born as two people to accomplish a mission. After the accomplishment of the mission, they merge back into one. Though very rare, such a divine couple also takes birth in all ages. Such a high soul may be born as two separate individuals as husband and wife, brothers, guru and disciple, etc.

The anubandha (bond) between husband and wife is thus of many types. The patterns of karma are myriad, exceedingly intricate and perplexing. It is very difficult to understand because karma is an eternal mystery that defies all description. Yet we should try to understand what little we could with the guiding 'light' of Jyotish.

KINDS OF KARMA

- i. Sanchita Karma or Total Accumulated Karma

This is the vast store of accumulated Karmas of all past lives (as a human being only). It may be indirectly seen in a man in his character, his tendencies, aptitudes, inclinations and desires.

ii. Prarabdha or Fructifying Karma

That portion of our Karmas allocated to us in this life is called Prarabdha. It is the fruit of our past actions that are being reaped in this life. All of Sanchita karma will not be experienced at one time. Only that portion which has 'become ripe' for experiencing in this life time is Prarabdha. The natal horoscope reveals Prarabdha only.

iii. Kriyaman or Current Karma

This is the fresh karma that we do in this life. This is the area that man has freedom to determine the course of action. This determines our future lives. This is where the concept of free will comes. The horary chart reflects both the prarabdha of past lives as well as the kriyaman of this life. In other words the prashna (horary) chart is the latest karmic bank statement with regard to the query!

iv. Agami Karma or Future Karma

The karma that is coming, in other words, new actions that you contemplate as a result of your thoughts, the way you envision the future, is Agami Karma. Today's plans when executed could become a reality one day. Planning is Agami while execution is Kriyaman. Thus Agami (planning) leads to Kriyaman(freshly executed actions of the present) which becomes Sanchita (accumulated) to later surface as Prarabdha (destiny). Sanchita karma manifests in two ways. Firstly, as Prarabdha or the so called destiny, and secondly, as the Samskaras or tendencies.

JYOTISH OR ASTROLOGY

It sheds light on life by revealing our karmic patterns. When a soul is born into a family, it is because of the karmic debts with the others in that family. When everything is ideal, the situations and the persons fit into the karmic patterns and the soul takes birth. In other words the individual karmic pattern selected for this life has to fit in or correspond to the group (whole) karmic patterns of the family, society, etc. This happens not just by chance, but in accordance with the cosmic patterns.

What relation does the horoscope have to destiny? Do planets dictate our lives? These are often asked questions. The planets do not control our lives. They reflect the cosmic patterns. The universe works in certain natural cyclic patterns. Both the macrocosm and microcosm operate in a similar way. The planets revolve around the sun. The electrons revolve around the nucleus in the atom. 'As above so below'. This is the fundamental law. A man can be born only at a time when his individual karmic pattern (Prarabdha) matches that of the macrocosm, that is the planetary and stellar patterns. What is happening at a macrocosmic level is also happening at a microcosmic level. By this cosmic law, the karmic pattern matches with the planetary pattern. In other words the time of birth is Prarabdha (destiny)!

By studying the patterns created by the stellar bodies, we can infer the karmic patterns of the individual, because they both are co-extensive. The horoscope thus reveals the Prarabdha karma of an individual. An intelligent astrologer can analyse to a reasonable extent, the Prarabdha with which a person is born, and based on that, the situations in which the individual may be placed in life at different times. The character, the tendencies, the Prakriti (Constitution), mental make-up and the situations in life are all Prarabdha indicated by the horoscope through the patterns revealed. Hence study of Jyotish or Hindu astrology can shed a lot of light on the unknown aspects of life and is very illuminating. That is why it is called the best light (Jyoti:light; Ish:Lord). Astrology is the best light on life.

Astrology can guide in our lives by giving hope, by correcting us and most importantly can be a Sadhana (spiritual practice) in itself when done unselfishly. To the spiritual person, it gives proof of karma, rebirth and the goal of life. Used wisely astrology can guide us and help us in our spiritual ascent. Areas like Medical astrology, Muhurta and even predictive astrology (only to some extent when used wisely) can be of immense help in our day to day lives. That is the purpose of astrology too.

LIMITATIONS OF ASTROLOGY

Astrology has its limitations too. An astrologer cannot see every thing. He has access to limited information. First only the Prarabdha is revealed through a horoscope, that too in a veiled manner. A very good, honest astrologer has access only to the 'Patterns'. He does not 'see' the story written there. He has to analyse the patterns and infer what it could possibly mean. Often the astrologer (Jyotish) comes to crossroads, where two or more interpretations seem equally possible. Each could manifest in many ways. Only the general or specific trend may be understood. But never 'exactly' as it would manifest. The actual event itself may manifest in a manner totally unanticipated by the astrologer. Often the astrologer may misjudge or even be working on wrong information (like wrong birth time)! Even if the astrologer is running a favourable planetary period (Dasha) himself and judges it correctly, he should remember that he has access to the Prarabdha only. He is in the dark where a vital area like Kriyaman Karma is concerned. This is the invisible area, where an individual can make or mar his destiny. Some of the effects of Kriyaman karma manifest in the future lives while some manifest in this life itself. An astrologer can never know exactly about the client's spiritual merit which may be rapidly declining or increasing. Though the predictions can often be uncannily accurate, no astrologer can be hundred percent correct always and therefore should be humble enough in his approach to the divine science. Nothing teaches more humility as the true practice of astrology does. With all these limitations, an honest astrologer can still guide us to a reasonable extent.

LESSONS

There are a few ideas that emerge from a sincere study of the ancient texts.

- Prarabdha cannot be changed by any one. This is destined to happen. No one can avert it. The best way is to accept things as they are and surrender to the Almighty. Prarabdha can affect the body only, not the mind. If one can cultivate sufficient mind control, he can avoid unnecessary mental suffering. In other words disasters happen, but mentally one can remain unaffected by adopting a spiritual attitude.

- Some people take a wrong message from all this. They feel that doing no work, inaction will help them. This is impossible. No human being can ever remain without karma. Bound by Prakriti (Nature), man is forced to do karma by the three gunas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas). Our Prakriti will makes us do karma. Karma is three fold. First there arises a desire. Then you will think of how to get it. Then you exert to attain it. Desire, thought and action always go together. So thought itself is subtle karma, the seed of karma. Karma can be done through the mind (thought), speech (words/verbal) and the body (the actual act). These are three threads, which make the rope of karma that binds all men. Hence even if a man is inactive and refrains from action, he may still be doing karma at a thought level.

As long as thoughts are there, karma is being done. A man may be acting, but mentally he may not have sense of agency, in which case karma cannot bind him. This is the essence of the Gita Sloka, 'He who sees action in inaction, and inaction in action, is a 'Yogi'. Seeing, hearing, talking, thinking, etc. are all Karmas. We are constantly performing karma through the mind, speech and body in all the three states of dreaming, sleeping and walking. There can be no state in which a man is not performing karma. Instead of running away from action, one should instead, give up all sense of agency, the identification with Karmas.

- Can one go beyond karma? As Swami Sivananda said, one can go beyond the results of karma.
- Attaining knowledge of Brahman or the Eternal ,destroys the whole lot of Sanchita karma. It can be greatly modified by entertaining lofty, divine thoughts, and doing virtuous actions. Agami karma can be destroyed by expiatory rites or Prayaschitta, and by removing the idea of agency through Nimitta Bhava (attitude that one is an instrument in the hands of God) and Sakshi Bhava (attitude that one is silent witness of the actions of the senses and the mind)". If you write a cheque for a hundred thousand rupees and do not sign it, is it valid? No, because your signature is not there. Similarly if you do not put your signature on the actions, they cannot bind you. In other words, you can act, but do not be attached to the result. Do it without any sense of agency, with a Nimita Bhava. Surrendering oneself to God, if one acts without any attachment to the results, the

Karmas do not bind him. The sense of 'I', 'mine' and self identification are your signature. When you do any karma without your signature, it is not going to bind you.

- As Swami Sivananda said, 'You have no Bhoga-svatantrya (freedom to determine the result of action) but you have Karma- Svatantrya (freedom to determine the course of action)'. In other words, the only area where we have a choice, is the present. Irrespective of the results, one should carry on with his duties, surrendering to the Lord. At times we may not have freedom to determine the results, but we are totally free to determine the course of action. By moving in the right direction according to Dharma, one can alter the course of the future (especially future lives). The situations that we find ourselves in, are due to Prarabdha, over which we have no control. But we have freedom as far as our reaction to the situation is concerned.
- 'What you are now at present is the result of what you thought and did in the past. What you shall be in the future will be the result of what you think and do now'. Hence, destiny is your doing. You have built it. Only you can undo it. If your actions of hundred lives have resulted in an adverse condition, you can still undo it. But it requires a hundred times more effort to balance the actions of previous lives. Yet, if you want to change your life you always have the freedom to determine the course of action, if not the results.
- How does karma actualize? The Karmas are stored in the causal body. When the cosmic planetary patterns change, when the time is ripe, the karmas ripen to fruition, the seeds of karma in the causal body sprout and project into the astral body where they influence the mind. The thoughts energies the physical body, thus, to act in a manner that is in accordance with the karmic patterns. Thus any undesirable seed of karma spotted in the horoscope can be prevented from actualizing itself at the mind level if one exercises enough control, since the body translates the thoughts into actions. But this is often very difficult. One who gains total control over emotions like anger, lust, greed etc is indeed a Yogi.

· Intensity of karma

Here a very important point has to be kept in mind. Karma can be classified into three types based on intensity.

- a. Dridha (Fixed or Strong) Karma
- b. Adridha (Not Strong/Non Fixed) Karma
- c. Dridha – Adridha (Strong/Not Strong or Not Too Strong) Karma

As the name suggests the Dridha Karmas are very difficult or almost impossible to be changed. Adridha karmas can be easily altered while Dridha – Adridha can be altered through concentrated efforts. Generally Upayes or Pariharas (spiritual remedies) are effective in the 2nd and 3rd types. But to change very strong (Dridha) karma, is very difficult, practically almost impossible. Either we encounter obstacles even in implementing the remedies or a life long attempting of the remedies is required! Change can only occur when the Agami and Kriyaman Karmas neutralise the Prarabdha. Hence, the quality and quantity of effort required to alter destiny (Prarabdha) depends on how strong our previous karmas were. But what we have done can be undone nevertheless. When an astrologer sees a confluence of factors, he predicts confidently for he knows that he is looking at Dridha Karma or Fixed Karma. Apart from Purushartha (Self efforts) there is another very important concept that the scriptures offer – Kripa or Divine Grace. Divine intervention or Grace can always do what human efforts fail to achieve.

Thus there are three factors which influence the outcome of Prarabdha.

1. Muhurtha: Choosing favourable time in accordance with the planetary patterns can augment or maximise the effectiveness of human efforts.
2. Agami & Kriyaman Karma: The thoughts and presents efforts can be initiated in the right direction sincerely. A strong current of favourable thoughts combined with sincere efforts can go a long way. Part of this, is seeking spiritual remedies (Upayes or Pariharas) that astrology can offer.

3. Kripa or Divine Grace: Divine Grace can intervene and change things. The spiritual remedies are partly aimed at drawing divine grace. That is why of all remedies, the most effective, reliable and simple ones are Mantras and Prayers. Mantras, prayers and danam or charity (which is nothing but Selfless Karma) are prescribed by the great sage Parashara.

WHERE TO PLACE ASTROLOGY

From the above points, it becomes clear how a wise person takes astrology. There are two ways:

- Seek astrological guidance, but don't be totally dependent on it. The astrologer has many limitations. No astrologer has the final say in any matter. Plan intelligently remembering the astrologer's advice. Any pariharas (remedies) suggested by the astrologer can be adopted as long as they are spiritually oriented and do not involve unnecessary expenditure. Such remedies (as per Parashara, the father of Indian astrology) are prayers and chanting of Mantras. Other remedies which involve huge costs are not reliable and are mostly suggested by dishonest astrologers. Accept your Prarabdha and do your duties cheerfully. Know that you cannot escape your Prarabdha. Even Yogis can help you only to postpone it, not avert it! But there is one area where you have total freedom. That is your current karma (Kriyaman). You can determine the course of action. You can bring in an anti-current of thoughts, a current of noble, spiritual thoughts, thoughts guided by Dharma. It is never too late to change the course of action. In the Kriyaman area, do good deeds. Let Dharma guide you. Some times there may be a conflict between free will (Kriyaman) and destiny (Prarabdha). However powerful Prarabdha is, DO NOT DESPAIR. Do your duties cheerfully without any attachment to the fruits of your actions. Surrender yourself to God and do your duties with a Nimitta Bhava. Great Yogis like Bhism and Vasishta have placed Purushartha or exertion (free will) above destiny. Do not underestimate the role of Kriyaman Karma, your free will to change the course of action.

The advanced people do not need astrology. They accept Prarabdha as God'. But the ignorant person develops pathological dependence on astrology, starts despairing, lapses into inaction or makes half-hearted attempts. It is for this reason that Vedantic thinkers and saints like Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati were opposed to astrology. But saints like Sri Rama Krishna who was Swami Vivekananda's guru, spoke positively about astrology because every realised soul knows it. It all depends on how we take it. The devotee (Bhakta) sees only Prarabdha. The vedantic sees only Purushartha. Both are correct for these are two sides of the same coin. The Bhaktha (Devotee) feels it is all Prarabdha only. Yet there is no fatalism in this. Prarabdha is only Purusharta (efforts born of free will) of previous births. Purushartha combined with Prarabdha brings effects. A man who is sick has to take the medicine (Purushartha) and leave the results to Prarabdha. Through Purushartha, Markandeya conquered death. Vasishta advocates Purushartha to Sri Rama throughout the Yoga Vasishta. We are neither totally bound by destiny nor are we totally free. We have limited freedom like a cow that has been tied to a post in a field with a rope. It can move freely, but only within the limits of the field. We have limited freedom depending upon how much we can stretch our Karma.

Human life is a story of the alternating patterns of duality, of happiness and suffering, joy and misery, ups and downs. There is not a single life without this admixture, without this pair of opposites. This is the law of life. Though the Atman is identical to the Brahman who is ever-radiant and blissful, the Jiva (individual) suffers because he is entrapped by the limiting adjuncts (Upadhis) of body and mind. The infinite seems to be entrapped by the finite body and mind. Misery is not natural to the Jiva. It comes to experience a state of misery because of its association with a body.

- a. So the cause of misery is a body
- b. The body (birth) is due to karma (previous actions)
- c. Karma arises from attachment and hate, by preference to certain objects and aversion to some.
- d. Attachment and hate arise from Egoism (sense of 'I' and 'Mine')
- e. This Egoism comes from indiscrimination.
- f. Indiscrimination, from ignorance of your true nature, that you are one with the Brahman

Thus, the root cause of all suffering and Karma is ignorance. The only way to go beyond this, is to bring the light of knowledge. The first step in this direction is to change one's attitude, to retrace one's steps along the same path that we have come down. In other words, the only solution is to go back to our cosmic roots, to become one with the Cosmic Consciousness. That is liberation that is moksha, salvation, whatever you call it. We are born so that we can exhaust our karmic debts, so that we may be free. This is the only answer, the only purpose of life. Jyotish is the light that reveals this great truth to us so that we may be free. A sincere study of Jyotish can be a great spiritual education, a Sadhana in itself, for it partly reveals the eternal mysteries of the cosmos to us. It leads us to the unknown through the known. It guides us out through the intricate labyrinth that life is, with its myriad pairs of duality. It shows us the way and ultimately sets us free, by taking us back to our cosmic roots.

Vyasa deva and Budha

[Editor: The following is an edited version of a conversation happened in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep, 2002]

Satya Prakash:

One thing I need to mention here is linking Vyasa Deva to Budha graha. It may be controversial. Except this, most other points are non-controversial and accepted as authentic by most people. I am open to change my introduction regarding Budha graha, depending on the feedback. While it is more easy to accept Vyasa for Jupiter (because of Vyasa being the great Master, the GURU OF GURUS), it should not be forgotten that Vamana is accepted universally for Jupite. The variation is only with Budha graha. Like I said earlier, Balarama, Buddha and Vyasa could be among other considerations here, from various sources. Or I could drop the reference to any graha itself, to avoid getting caught in a controversy. But originally this paragraph had to be there since I copied stories for all the grahas, their deities etc from mythology. Apart from this possible controversy, I feel that the remaining contents are relatively ok from a traditional point of view. Any constructive feedback will be appreciated, especially those who are familiar with the ORIGINAL LITERATURE AND TRADITIONS.

PVR:

Linking Budha to Vyasa is indeed strange. Budha is a great student and scholar. Linking Vyasa to him is inappropriate. As you yourself point out, Jupiter is the teacher and signicator of traditional knowledge.

Another planet you can link to Vyasa is Ketu. Ketu is said to be an incarnation of Rudra. So is Vyasa (that is why Vyasa is worshipped with the Mrityuanjaya beeja). Ketu stands for Masya (fish) incarnation of Vishnu, in which Vedas were saved. Vyasa also saved the knowledge of Vedas by dividing them for Kali Yuga. Jupiter and Ketu are more apt for Vyasa than Mercury.

Satya Prakash:

Thanks for the feedback. Like I said, I am open to change this part of the introduction depending on some feedback. Of course I am not convinced really with this and hence solicited any constructive feedback or guidance. But with Matsya avatar and Vamana being agreed upon universally by all the Puranas and Upapuranas, with the other nine avatars corresponding to Parasara's list, the variations arise only with one name. As you know Buddha, Balarama, Vyasa etc are the names preferred by various sources instead of the Buddha. So except for Buddha, Parasara's list is actually agreed upon by most sources. So I was wondering which avatar should be given instead of the Buddha. Moreover if I decide to retain the Buddha's name in the list, I would be in a very awkward position of having to choose between being faithful in my narration to the puranas (which means that I have to portray the Buddha as having DELIBERATELY MISLEAD the people and creating confusion by teaching a false way!) or risk being

DIFFERENT from the puranas in my narration of the Buddha's life and PURPOSE by writing his teachings, his message in his own words.

As I already stated the purpose of writing these stories- It is to make people aware of the life and message of the avatar while simultaneously giving an easy way to meditate on the QUALITIES, EXPRESSION AND MANIFESTATION of the graha. As you know Parayana (devout reading) of the lives of saints and avatars is a very popular remedy. So I started compiling myths and stories of the grahas and their corresponding deities etc. At the same time I also thought that weaving in their MESSAGE at appropriate places within the narration, would be even more effective because the teachings sink into the mind. Moreover it gives the reader a chance to re-live the myth and actually meditate on the qualities of the graha, the higher manifestation of the graha. With all this in the background, including the Buddha's name put me in an awkward situation. But I wanted to be as close to Parasara as possible (with the grahas and avatars) and of course faithful to the spirit of the Puranas in my narration. So if at all, an avatar INSTEAD OF THE BUDDHA FOR BUDHA (MERCURY) is to be taken. Moreover an avatar that corresponds to Budha graha and whose life is inspiring and holds a message for all.

Any help in this regard will be appreciated. As for Vyasa Maharsi himself, I think this can be a separate work by itself, with no reference to any graha. Though originally when I started writing the stories for the grahas it started with considering Vyasa deva, eventually I realised that a full length tribute to Him is more befitting, as a full work in itself. I ended up with matter enough for a hundred pages, but wrote only 60 pages so far. As I said in my earlier post, I would appreciate feedback of this sort. Because I don't want to do anything that is against the tradition in THIS SORT OF WORK IN A MAJOR WAY. I am still wondering as to the alternate choice for Mercury. I am posting a chapter from the Planetary myth book to give an idea of what kind of stories you will find in the book.

For instance under Mars you will find:

1. Virabhadra's story (apart from the puranas, sometimes I have considered variations from other works- like Charaka Samhita in this case, because it brings out the medical astrology part)
2. Kartikeya's stories (standard deity)
3. Narasimha avatar (from Dasa avatars)

Now I have to get back to work. It is 10 am here in Australia. I am posting two other chapters (rough drafts) one as an introduction to sacred myth, the other as an introduction to sacred myth in the traditional context (puranas etc)

Sanjay Rath:

The nine avatar given by Parasara reflect the natures of the planets and to that extent are correct in portraying the deities as the ISTA DEVATA (i.e. the nine avatar for the nine planets and if Lagna is in the 12th from Karakamsa, the Kalki avatar is indicated). This is not disputed.

However, when it comes to Dharma Devata and Moksha, the duel between Parasurama & Ganesha resulting in Ganesha losing one tusk and other such portrayal of Parasurama vis-a-vis Rama as well as the Buddha avatar speaking against the Vedas for the time being to remove the people from the animal sacrifices etc prevalent in the times in the misunderstanding of the Vedas has resulted in their worship not being performed. The Puranas also corroborate this point. Thus, the difference lies in the DHARMA DEVATA and for this purpose, it is necessary that the avatar should have always worked to protect DHARMA. When Parasurama went around destroying the Kshatriyas, only those who worshipped Ganesha survived the onslaught. The relationship between Mokshakaraka Ganesha and Moksha goal Vishnu is intricately wound. When Vyasadeva started

narrating the Puranas and other epics, Ganesha took the responsibility of ensuring an unbroken and clear documentation. Thus, when it comes to Venus and Mercury in the ninth from Karakamsa, the DHARMA DEVATA cannot be Parasurama & Buddha. The avatar chosen at Puri are Balabhadra & Sudarshana. However, the latter is definitely not a Vishnu avatar. Balabhadra or Balaram for Mercury seems fine as Revati His spouse is the 27th nakshatra in Pisces and He is associated with agriculture (patron deity) as Haladhara.

Satya Prakash:

Thanks for the feedback and comments. As you remarked Balarama seems to be fine. I may go with that if I do not include the Buddha. Or still better, I could include both.

Sacred Myth in the traditional context

[Editor: The following is an article posted by Satya Prakash Chowdhary in vedic-astrology group in Sep, 2002]

The Puranas declare that one derives immense benefits by reading the sacred stories. For instance, the Markandeya purana affirms that all sins will be forgiven by listening to the stories of that Purana. It also promises a long life and fulfillment of one's objectives. Further it is stated that reading the eighteen puranas, one attains the merits (punya) one achieves by performing an ashwamedha sacrifice. The Agni purana too declares that great benefits are derived from merely hearing the puranas recited, that if one arranges for a traditional recitation of the Puranas, one lives long and attains heaven. Likewise other puranas too affirm that great benefits can be derived from a devout reading of the sacred stories.

The eighteen puranas are held so sacred each of them is associated with one part of Vishnu's body, as the Padma purana affirms. The same text promises that hearing a single verse of the sacred text will destroy the sins committed in the space of one day. One gets the merit of donating a thousand cows to a spiritual person, just by listening to the recital of one chapter of the text. It also affirms that listening to a recital of the entire text can fetch the same merit as the performance of an ashwamedha yagna, and that listening to the recital of the text is far better than performing great austerities or donating alms in terms of the rewards obtained.

Most people find it cumbersome to go through the entire body of sacred myths. Yet others do not have sufficient time to do so. Since the texts affirm unanimously that reading even a single story or even a verse is highly meritorious, it would be definitely very beneficial to read some stories at least. But how does one select the stories? There should be some criteria.

In vedic astrology, there is a unique scheme of the dashas (or planetary periods) which help an astrologer in timing the predictions. The astrological texts also recommend certain remedial measures for each of the planets during their periods. Based on these criteria, I have compiled all the stories of the planets first.

In Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, Maharshi Parasara reveals the following. "The Unborn lord has many incarnations. He has incarnated as the nine grahas to bestow on the living beings the results due to their Karmas. He assumed the auspicious form of grahas to annihilate the evil forces and sustain the divine. From Sun the incarnation of Rama, from Moon that of Krishna, from Mars that of Narasimha, from Mercury that of Buddha, from Jupiter that of Vamana, from Venus that of Parashurama, from Saturn that of Kurma (Tortoise), from Rahu (north node) that of Varaha (boar), and from Ketu (south node) that of Meena (Fish) occurred. All other incarnations than these also are through the grahas. The beings with a predominant Cosmic Consciousness are divine. The beings with more individual consciousness are mortal beings. The high degree of Cosmic Consciousness from the grahas did incarnate as Rama, Krishna, etc. After completing the mission, the divine element from the grahas again merges in the respective grahas. The individual portions from the grahas take births as human beings and live their lives according to their Karmas and again merge in the grahas. And at the time of the Great Destruction, the grahas as well merge in Lord Vishnu."

Following Parasara, I decided to include the stories of the incarnations of Vishnu for the nine planets respectively. Each of Vishnu's incarnations is said to have taken place through a particular graha (planet). Since there is a correspondence between the planets and various deities, reading the stories of the deity corresponding to the planet, is also an effective remedy. Following certain authorities like the *Uma Samhita*, I decided to include particular cantos from the *Ramayana*.

Tradition holds that devout reading of certain cantos of the *Ramayana* is an effective remedy for particular planetary afflictions. So I have written a section on selected cantos of the *Ramayana*. I have followed only Valmiki's *Ramayana*, remaining faithful to the original so as to retain the original flavour. Thus this book has a collection of sacred myths from many ancient Indian sources. And these stories have been categorized according to the planets. Thus if you are running the dasha or antardasha of Saturn, you can read either the myths related to Saturn, or the story of Vishnu's incarnation as the turtle, or the specific canto from the *Ramayana*, or you can read all of them if you have the time and enjoy doing so. Perhaps you might want to light a lamp, burn incense, and then settle down to meditate on the myths, having created a suitable environment. You could read the myths related to a planet on its weekday regularly, or even daily for a period of forty days or for the entire period or subperiod of the planet. Perhaps you may just want to read the myths whenever you feel like. But as you continue doing so, gradually the myth will start working on you. The various images will become alive and eventually be integrated, taking you closer to your true Self.

In this book, I have narrated stories of the planets or their deities mostly. Most of the stories are extracted from the Puranas. Here let me tell you about the puranas in general. It is widely believed that the puranas were compiled by the sage Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa. The puranas themselves declare a slightly different version. In each age (Mahayuga), in every Dwapara yuga, Vishnu in his form of Veda Vyasa, incarnates to uphold the Vedas. He divides the Vedas and helps to preserve them for the coming kali yuga. Let me acquaint you with the time cycles as envisioned by the ancients.

One kalpa is one day for Brahma. A day of Brahma is followed by the night of Brahma. At the end of one Kalpa, the Universe is dissolved. And 14 manvantaras constitute a cycle or Kalpa. A manvantara is an era and is ruled by a Manu. Currently we are in Vaivasvata manvantara. 71 Mahayugas constitute one manvantara. One Mahayuga comprises of 12000 years of the gods or, equivalently, 4,320,000 human years. In other words a Veda Vyasa is born every 4.3 million years! In this Manvantara, twenty-eight mahayugas have elapsed. Thus twenty-eight Veda Vyosas have incarnated so far.

The Vyasa for this Dwapara yuga is Krishna Dwaipayana, the son of the illustrious sage Parasara, who is considered the father of Vedic astrology, for it is held widely that it was he who composed the famous astrological text 'Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra'. When Krishna Dwaipayayana Vedavyasa sought to divide the four Vedas, he first gathered around him four learned disciples and taught them the four Vedas (*Vishnu Purana*). He later taught the puranas which are known as the fifth veda, to his disciple Romaharshana (The *Bhagavata Purana*). In the beginning, there was only one Purana and sage Vyasa divided it into eighteen. (*Matsya Purana*). The original source for all puranas is the *Purana Samhita*, which Vyasa taught to Romaharshana. Romaharshana had six disciples to whom he taught it. Sumati, Agnivarchah, Mitrayu, Shamshapayana, Akritavrana and Savarni are the names of these disciples. Each of these disciples composed a purana based on the *Purana Samhita*. (*Vishnu Purana*).

As the *Linga Purana* says, it could be possible that sage Parasara taught the *Purana Samhita* to his son Vyasa who in turn taught it to Romaharshana. Thus though all the puranas are attributed to Vyasadeva himself, the texts of the eighteen puranas were written by various disciples. This has resulted in some differences between the texts. Moreover, most of these texts that we see today in their present and final form, were rewritten with many interpolations between 300AD and 1000AD. But earlier versions of the puranas were in existence even during 500BC. This also explains the differences and contradictions between the puranas.

Thus to take everything in the puranas as final or authentic in a historical or factual sense may be erroneous. At the same time, this should not deter us from benefiting from the living wisdom. Moreover there are many gems, facts and spiritual truths in these myths in spite of the interpolations. Most of the interpolations are obvious to a discerning reader in their subject and style. Some accounts are amplified beyond their primary scope. At times efforts to glorify or elevate particular schools of thought or deities are made in these interpolations. But it is possible to still feel the common spirit and the original sense of the myth.

Each text highlights certain things and has its own uniqueness while all the texts have some similarities. Some stories are differently narrated in different puranas. I have tried to capture the spirit of the story while remaining faithful to the original. Wherever two puranas differed I followed the more plausible version. I also preferred the most common version. At the same time, if a purana could add to the richness of detail to the central story selected from another, I borrowed such additional details. Rarely I took the liberty of adding a comment or two where it seemed relevant. But such comments too are based on a knowledge of other sacred texts considered to be an integral part of the Vedic literature. The agamas, jyotisa or astrology, the itihasas, the puranas, all support each other.

Reading this book will give you the benefits of reading selected portions of the puranas. Since it is declared by the Puranas themselves that reading even a single story or even a verse is highly meritorious, I am convinced that a devout reading of the sacred myths in this book will prove beneficial spiritually and astrologically too. Since they have been categorized under the corresponding planet's section, one may even read the myths systematically according to the current planetary period or sub-period. Or you may just meditate on these stories for their spiritually therapeutic value.

Remedial Measures for planetary afflictions

[Editor: The following is an article posted by Satya Prakash Chowdhary in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep, 2002]

Vedic astrology is well known for the remedial measures that it prescribes for various planetary afflictions and periods. From charity to chanting, a variety of techniques are used. Some prescribe chanting of sacred syllables and long mantras, while others prescribe wearing carefully chosen gemstones. Yet others recommend donating particular articles to appease particular planets. But the simplest of all remedies, is devout reading of particular myths or stories. Meditating on these myths is a very old custom in India. The myths are generally interesting and can be read by anyone. Remedies like chanting, quite often have dos and don'ts attached. One needs to be initiated by an adept for most mantras. The right accent and intonation is often very important.

And so far as the gemstones are concerned, picking the most suitable gem is in itself a not too easy job. Even if one has successfully identified the appropriate gemstone, it is hard to get the right quality stone. Flawed stones can channelise negative energies of the planet. Rituals like the Yagnas are quite often costly and one could face practical difficulties. Talismans and other such remedies give scope for exploitation. It is quite common to come across unscrupulous astrologers who prescribe costly remedies just to fill their pockets. Some astrologers are more eager to prescribe remedies than to predict. I could go on pointing out the difficulties one encounters, in the process of trying to appease the planets. What is the way out?

Three modes of remedying- Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic

First let us see how these remedies work. Certain remedies try to neutralize certain previous karmas. Some try to increase the balance of good karmas. Based on their approach and spirit, remedies can be classified into three categories- tamasic, rajasic and sattvic. Most remedies of the 'Lal Kitab' are either tamasic or rajasic. Tamasic remedies give temporary relief only. Carrying or wearing a particular thing on one's body, or throwing coins in flowing water or not parting with articles signified by a planet during its period, are all, of this kind. They don't really either neutralize the unwholesome karmas of the past or help acquire merit. They could at the most give

only temporary relief. Certain other karmas like feeding birds, animals and persons signified by the planet aim at neutralizing the previous unwholesome karmas, or at increasing the merit (punya). Such remedies are rajasic. They are much better than the tamasic ones. Yet they do not work at the causal level.

The Tantric path offers a variety of remedies, some sattvic, some rajasic and some tamasic. There are some who employ the knowledge of Tantra for self-centered activities, activities that at times are not in others' interests. Energy is in itself, neither good nor evil. It is the way we employ it that makes the difference. Though one can employ the great forces of nature for evil purposes or to harm others, in the long run, the effect of their "negative karmas" will catch up with them. None can escape the law of karma. Employing the same cosmic forces for peaceful and beneficial purposes is allowed. At the same time, it should be remembered that the use of yantra, mantra and tantra for occult purposes, for the fulfillment of worldly desires is only peripheral and the actual purpose of Tantra- to expand one's awareness till it liberates oneself taking one back to the Cosmic source- should not be lost sight of.

The sattvic remedies are the ones that work at the causal level. They cut across the root of karmas, by bringing a change of consciousness. What is the point in feeding crows, when one remains arrogant and petty minded? Ultimately all sattvic remedies aim at a transformation of consciousness. For it is here that the key to 'Wholeness' lies. Any significant change has to come from within. And for such change to be long lasting, it needs to be from the source. So only remedies that work on the roots of karma, can give more lasting effects. Such sattvic remedies include genuine sadhana (spiritual work) and a selfless or at least 'detached' attitude. But spiritual work done with a motive becomes rajasic. Thus chanting a sattvic mantra for the fulfillment of a desire, can make the remedy a rajasic one. Nevertheless it still elevates one's mind. Thus chanting certain sattvic mantras, reading or listening to the sacred myths, serving others and charity, are all sattvic remedies, depending on one's attitude.

While chanting some mantras needs a certain amount of spiritual discipline, the degree of discipline required while reading the stories, is far less, thus making it a far more Universal remedy, a remedy that can be adopted by one and all, a remedy that is very simple and has no side effects. The safest remedies are reading the sacred stories, and helping others. When done sincerely with the right preparation, chanting mantras too is good. But a wrong approach may at times bring unnecessary problems. Chanting the names of the Supreme God is another safe and easy remedy. Meditation is also quite beneficial. But most people find meditation either boring or difficult. It is here that the stories are very useful.

The status of Sacred Myth in remedial Measures

While reading the stories, one can easily concentrate, thus making it easier to indirectly meditate on the same energy. Reading the stories of the planets and the respective deities is another form of meditating on them, thus opening our minds to their beneficial influences. The more we meditate on the various significations and lessons that a planet imparts, the more we get attuned to the positive workings of the planets. Gradually we imbibe the 'spirit' of the planet as its relevance and significance 'sinks' into our psyche. We become channels for the benefic planetary energies to flow through. But for this to happen, we should become hollow, like a bamboo. A solid stick cannot become a flute. Only a hollow bamboo can become a flute, like the flute in the hands of Krishna. Then the cosmic energies flow through us; eternal music comes through us. Just as "Darkness is not dispensed just by mentioning the word 'lamp'" (Kularnava Tantra), however well said, words are insufficient. It is the actual experience that can give self-realization. This is what a devout reading of the sacred myth does. The external worship is much more than mere obeisance to the deity. It is a psychological experiment of systematically attuning the body and the psychic forces for a gradual unfolding. It is a process of 'centering' one's psychic energies and ultimately the 'unification' with the cosmos. The degree to which the stories help us, depends on our faith too. Done with an attitude of faith, love and sincerity, the practice of devout reading unites theory and practice to help in the expansion of consciousness.

That which never happened but always is

At this point, it is helpful to know more about myth in general. Myth in its popular sense, means something widely believed and contrary to fact. But it is not so. As Salustius said, "Myths are things which never happened but always are". In its earlier sense, a myth is more like a metaphor of some subtlety on a subject difficult to describe in any other way. A myth is "an involuntary collective statement based on an unconscious psychic experience". According to Carl Jung, "The primitive mentality does not invent myths, it experiences them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche . . .

Many of these unconscious processes may be indirectly occasioned by consciousness, but never by conscious choice. Others appear to arise spontaneously, that is to say, from no discernible or demonstrable conscious cause. ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype," ibid. par. 261.)

Living Wisdom

Ancient Indian tradition too holds that its mythology is not invented and that it is based on original revelations. And that it is timeless. It is living wisdom. Each time the stories are retold, they become alive again. Such stories are experienced, rather relived. Not in the external world, but in an internal world, within the psyche. But the listener has to be open and receptive. The stories are charged with energy, energy that can be transmitted to whoever is open enough to receive it. But myth cannot speak to a listener whose mind is barred by over-intellectualization. If one starts intellectualizing any experience, the whole charm is lost. If one starts intellectualizing love, it boils down to chemistry, depriving oneself of the wonderful experience called love. So too with Myth. In order to experience the living wisdom, for it to work on your consciousness, you have to stop intellectualizing the stories. You should let them penetrate your consciousness, so that you may touch their source- the preconscious psyche. In doing so, you will touch your own source- where you are one with the Cosmic.

Myth can be therapeutic too, as modern psychology affirms. But that is not the end of it. The images and symbols used by mythology are not randomly selected, but very precise since they evolved naturally. Mythology makes use of precise, vital images and symbols to awaken the lost memory of our true nature, and in the process, helps the individual to recover the lost unity and assume the nature of the original Cosmic consciousness.

Sacred myth- A veritable labyrinth of symbols and images

In these myths we come a long way, passing though a veritable labyrinth as it were, of symbols, images, gods and goddesses. At times, the average reader may wonder what actually these symbols and deities are. Are they just man-made conceptions to facilitate comprehension? Are the deities just various psychological forces? Are they just transformers of our psychic Energy? Are they just Cosmic forces? Are they just universal archetypes repeating constantly in the midst of men at all times? To answer that they are any of these would be wrong for they are all these and much more. After reading the stories, if anyone mistakes them to be an intellectual game, there would be nothing more farther from truth. Sadhana is not an intellectual game, but a spiritual experience, which helps us to discover our Cosmic roots, an exercise which helps us to discover our own self, the awareness of which makes life joyful, radiant and infinitely meaningful.

Such symbols and deities are not "manufactured", but discovered through primal inner sources. It is true that the symbols are born from a universal human compulsion and embody "timeless" universal principles. True, Shakti is power and energy. Yet to render Shakti merely as power would be erroneous. She is not just power or energy as is understood commonly. She is the power of Shiva (Consciousness). She is the power of everything, the power of peace, the power of meditation, the power of silence, the power of action, a power that permeates everything from within. She is the power of wisdom, devotion, meditation and action. She is SvaShakti, one's own power. She is the power of transformation. And Sadhana awakens the dormant power within us. Shakti is the creative mystery, which displays itself in various ways. To the physicist, she is the

inherent active force of matter; to the psychologist, she is the force of mind (the psychological force); to the mystic she is the force behind all that IS.

All the deities we worship, are an embodiment of various attributes that reveal the supreme principle (ultimate reality) in one way or the other. Everything is born from cosmic consciousness. When we do not forget this fundamental truth, there would be no difficulty in understanding that the Supreme consciousness, the Ultimate Reality which is beyond all forms and descriptions can assume the forms of the various deities, in response to the wishes of the devotees who supplicate it. Countless mystics and seers have realized, seen and experienced these forms. These deities are not just symbols but real. They are as real as you and me, but on a different level.

Nobody can deny the power of the mind. It is the power of the mind, that underlies all man made creations. The imagination, dreams and thoughts of man slowly become a reality. Every scientific discovery and invention is a proof of this. Seeing the birds flying, man, by the power of his mind has invented the aeroplane. Now imagine the power of millions of people meditating on a form of the Supreme, as a chosen deity! The power of their minds is enough to really make the Supreme Principle manifest itself in the form that they meditate on. New archetypes emerge at times from the collective mind. The older archetypes do not die, but continue to live, albeit through the new ones, and keep surfacing again. Thus old ones merge into new archetypes. This process of integration goes on as the collective mind lives its role in Nature's evolution. Thus the Vedic Rudra is integrated into the Tantric Shiva, who is adored in different forms, each form being a facet of the same Shiva.

You should also remember, the famous Rig vedic affirmation, 'Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti'. 'Truth is one; sages call it by various names' (1.164.46) sums up the Vedic approach to the various names of Truth or Reality. Though the various deities appear to be different and independent, they are actually facets of the same Cosmic Consciousness, Brahman, or the Supreme.

Archetypes and archetypal images as Universal motifs

From the depths of the prehistoric human psyche, emerge the nebulous beginnings of the images of the gods and demons. Such images grew slowly and developed spontaneously as man moved through and lived in the various bygone eras. They were not thrust on man, but manifested naturally as any other archetypal image would. Here it may not be out of context if I deviate, to acquaint the average reader with the term 'archetype'.

The word 'archetype' was first used by the famous sage and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung in 1919. Today it is not an uncommon word. But how many of us have understood Jung's usage of the word? I have often come across people using the word differently. What are archetypes? Jung posited that in addition to the personal unconscious, there is also the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is formed of two components- the instincts and the archetypes. He had discovered that the delusions of the insane seemed to call on a collective fund of archaic images and symbols.

While instincts are impulses, which carry out actions from necessity and have a biological quality (for instance the homing instinct in birds), the archetypes are different. Archetypes are innate, unconscious modes of understanding which regulate our perception itself. These inborn forms of 'intuition' are the necessary determinants of all psychic phenomena. At times it seems as if Jung doesn't make a distinction between the instincts and the archetypes, while at many places he differentiates them. Jung also believed that many of our more complex social behaviors and/or rituals are also inborn, universal, archetypal behaviors. Then the intricate mating games and courtship rituals that we humans (as well as other animals) engage in, are also considered to be universal, archetypal behaviors. Going beyond the basic instincts, beyond the social, "instincts" (rituals or behaviors), Jung saw even the human desire for spirituality - our need for experiencing "the Eternal" (God) - as being an inborn archetypal behavior. "If therefore, we speak of "God" as an "archetype," we are saying nothing about His real nature - but are rather letting it be known

that "God" already has a place in that part of our psyche which is pre-existent to consciousness. And that therefore God cannot be considered merely an invention of consciousness. We neither make Him more remote nor eliminate Him, but bring Him closer to the possibility of being experienced.... The psyche of the infant in its preconscious state is anything but (italics mine) a tabula rasa (blank sheet); it is already preformed in a recognizably individual way, and is moreover equipped with all specifically human instincts, as well as with the a priori foundations of the higher functions...

And if, by employing the concept of "archetype," we attempt to define a little more closely the point at which the "god" grips us, we have not abolished anything, only approached closer to the source of life." (Short Excerpt from Memories, Dreams, and Reflections) The great psychologist Jung thus tells us that we are born with the desire to know and experience God! Archetypal images, as universal patterns or motifs, which come from the collective unconscious, are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales. "An archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors. If such a content should speak of the sun and identify with it the lion, the king, the hoard of gold guarded by the dragon, or the power that makes for the life and health of man, it is neither the one thing nor the other, but the unknown third thing that finds more or less adequate expression in all these similes, yet-to the perpetual vexation of the intellect-remains unknown and not to be fitted into a formula." ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype," CW 9i, par. 267) On a personal level, archetypal motifs are patterns of thought or behavior that are common to humanity at all times and in all places.

The archetypes have no material existence and reveal themselves only as 'images'. Jung distinguished per se the 'archetype' from the 'archetypal image'. The existence of the archetype itself can only be inferred, since it is by definition, unconscious. But the archetypal image protrudes into consciousness and is the way we perceive the archetype for ourselves. Thus archetypes are primordial ideas, common to all mankind, and express only through the archetypal images. Archetypes are charged with emotion and function autonomously from the unconscious. They are numinous, electrically charged with a sense of the sacred.

Hinduism- A living system of universal symbols and images

Throughout the centuries, various religions and their sacred writings have identified archetypes (and visionary, numinous archetypal experiences) using a wide array of terminology for them. While it is true that other ancient cultures across the globe, too had their own system of symbols, Hinduism, is probably the only one that has survived and been preserved well over the centuries. It has the most evolved, universal and living system of symbols, images, and other such tools of transformation. Such archetypes and myths belong to none, they are universal. Very little of ancient cultures like the Babylonian is known today. The fragments are hard to follow. The essence of the Greek myths had been lost and they have degenerated from living wisdom to allegories and fables. It is here that the world can benefit from the living wisdom of ancient India.

Sacred Myth- A therapeutic tool

Meditating on the sacred myths can help the seeker in synthesizing both the conscious and unconscious contents of the mind. Thus it is therapeutic and takes the individual closer to 'Wholeness'. Jung's own words best describe this idea. "The archetype is pure, in-vitiated nature, and it is nature that causes man to utter words and perform actions whose meaning is unconscious to him, so unconscious that he no longer gives it a thought. A later, more conscious humanity, faced with such meaningful things whose meaning none could declare, hit upon the idea that these must be the last vestiges of a Golden age, where there were men who knew all things and taught wisdom to the nations. In the degenerate days that followed, these teachings were forgotten and were now only repeated as mindless mechanical gestures. In view of the findings of modern psychology it cannot be doubted that there are preconscious archetypes which were never conscious and can be established only indirectly through their effects upon the conscious

contents... The achievement of a synthesis of conscious and unconscious contents, and the conscious realization of the archetype's effects upon the conscious contents, represents the climax of a concentrated spiritual and psychic effort, in so far as this is undertaken consciously and of set purpose." (412-413, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, The Collected Works, Volume 8)

Myth as a therapeutic tool, exorcises the practitioner's (sadhak) mind and liberates him from his various mental complexes. The Cosmic process is expressed in images. The various psychic or psychological forces are picturised as deities, male or female, beautiful or terrifying. Some myths require the recognition and transformation of negative forces within oneself. Powerful as they are, these negative forces (demonic forces) are constantly at work within and cannot be suppressed. They need to be accepted and given a different orientation, a 180 degree turn. Fully envisioning the darker side of one's personality, these dark forces are transformed into illuminating forces. Most of the myths which narrate the struggle between the Demons (asuras) and Gods (Devas) symbolize the inner conflict between the positive and negative forces within us. Eventually in all myths, the Gods triumph, but not without the intervention of the Supreme Lord.

It is divine grace, prayer and meditation that help us to overcome the demonic forces of ignorance, egoism and lust. The demons as well as the Gods are Universal Archetypes, symbols which when used with background knowledge of mythology, bring to life the various psychic forces. These are then, worked out in a suitable environment.

Back to Cosmic Roots

[Editor: The following is an article by Satya Prakash posted in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep, 2002]

He who knows the inverted Peepal tree, with roots in the Primal Being, whose trunk is Brahma, and whose leaves are the Karmas, is a knower of the Real Meaning of the Vedas"

--- Lord Krishna, Sloka-1, chapter 15, Bhagawad Gita.

As a child, I often wondered what lies beyond the sky. At school when I came to know of the Solar system, I wondered what lies beyond the solar system and if there are other solar systems, what lies beyond them; if there are other universes beyond this one ... It would go on forever. Every night whenever I was allowed to go up on to the terrace, I would lie on my back and watch the stars, wondering where this immense Universe came from. As children, some of us would have questioned the origins of existence.

There is nothing that does not have a mother. Everything in the world whether a living being, a form of Nature, or an idea has been generated from another being, form or idea. This generative process goes back indefinitely, prompting one to ask: who or what is the first mother? This search for a definite starting point is like peeling an Onion layer by layer, until one finally reaches the center where nothing is there except the same empty space that surrounds and maintains the entire onion.

The ultimate Reality – the mother of all that is, is beyond all form, words, thoughts and names. All notions of space and time, in fact the very mind dissolves into a primordial pool that is unfathomable. But man always tries to know the unknown through the known and has tried to understand that which is beyond the mind through the mind. The Sad darsanas (6 systems of philosophy) explain the concept of creation from various viewpoints. Apart from these, the various schools of Saiva and Sakta Tantras also explain the concept of creation. In essence, all these schools of thought explain the same. At root

all are similar, the external differences being only due to the various angles from which they approach.

The ultimate reality, the core of all things and all Beings is beyond words, thoughts and description. The seers called it by various names – Param Shiva, Brahman, Pure Consciousness and Cosmic consciousness. Call it what you want to, but it is the eternal ocean in which the countless universes arise as waves; the boundless space within which everything is born, grows and dies; the source of all things, the substratum upon which all things appear, the one and only reality which is unproduced, indestructible, motionless, eternal, all-pervading and beyond time and space. It is a veritable zero of vibrationless equilibrium.

While the details differ, most of these schools of thought have something in common. Most Indian schools (Hindu schools to be precise) are at root vedic. What do the Vedic seers say about the universe? For that I have to tell you a story.

I will tell you a story, the story of the universe – how it was born, how it evolved and how the various forms that we see today came to be. In the beginning, long back, in a far-off period, there was neither the sky nor atmosphere above, neither death nor immortality, there was neither the Sun nor Earth, nor day, nor night, nor light, nor darkness, neither naught nor aught. There existed only the One without a second. The whole universe existed in an invisible, subtle and unmanifested state. What we see today and call the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars and the sky was then, only formless matter in its most elemental and compressed form. That One alone, non-being, without a second, the ancient vedic seers called it, the "Hiranyagarbha" – the womb of light. This cosmic womb was all that existed.

The condition of what we call matter today, in the Hiranyagarbha, was in its most elemental form, as Infinite Space (Akasha). In this etheric state, there was an intense vibration, (spanda) which gave it so much dynamism, that it resulted in luminosity and expansion. Thus there arose light where there was formerly no light.

Now the scientist tells us something similar, that there was a time, nearly ten or twenty thousand billion years ago when the universe was infinitesimally small and infinitely dense. Then there was a "Big Bang" and ever since, the universe is expanding. At the big bang itself, the universe is thought to have had zero size, and so infinitely hot. But as the universe expanded, the temperature of the radiation decreased. As it cooled, atoms were formed which combined to form molecules. After many more events, at regions that were slightly denser than average, the expansion would have slowed down, caused them to start to re-collapse, spin fast, and eventually give birth to galaxies.

As time went on the atoms within the clouds of gases started colliding with one another increasing the temperature, eventually starting nuclear reactions. The heat given off would raise the pressure and thereby stop the clouds from contracting any further. They would remain stable in this state for a long time as Stars or Suns, burning Hydrogen into Helium and radiating the resulting energy as heat and light. The outer regions of the star may sometimes get blown off in a tremendous explosion called a Supernova. The debris or dust of such a stellar explosion forms many more second or third generation suns (stars). Our own Sun was formed some five thousand billion years ago out of a cloud of rotating gas containing the debris of earlier supernovas. Most of the gas in that cloud went to form the Sun or got blown away, but a small amount of the heavier elements collected together to form the bodies that now orbit the Sun as planets, like the Earth.

Initially the earth was very hot and without an atmosphere. In the course of time, it cooled and acquired an atmosphere from the omission of gases from the rocks. Gradually life evolved in the oceans some three million years back as macromolecules, then single celled organisms and slowly multi-cellular organisms. Then the first amphibian stepped on land, then the reptiles, birds and mammals, till eventually man came into being.

This in short, is the story of the Universe, how it came to be. But this is the story of the beginning of one cycle. Such cycles are endless. The Universe itself is without beginning or ending really. It has always been there and will always be. The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad (2.1,19) compares the Universe to a spider sitting at the center of its web, issuing and reabsorbing its threads in concentric circles, all held at one point. This image recurs in several vedic and tantric works and sums up the Indian world view- Unity in diversity. All existence is governed by a single principle, the point of origin of the Supreme Consciousness, from which everything issues and into which everything returns. Thus all complexity came out of simplicity, heterogeneity out of homogeneity and variety out of uniformity. All this beauty and splendor with apparent paradoxes is the result of the sport of Nature, a Cosmic play, a continuous dance towards order and perfection.

Then who are we? Where have we come from? Whether the story is told by the ancient Vedic seer in terms of the "Hiranyagarbha" or by the modern scientist in terms of the "Crack in the cosmic Egg" (in fact Brahmanda can be translated as the 'Cosmic Egg') or the "Big Bang", the essence is the same. "The stuff of stars has come alive". The living beings of earth are cosmic creatures, products of celestial events – atomic collisions, molecular unions and stellar explosions. We are the children of the universe, children of immortal bliss. Within our human bodies, we have within us a miniature universe within our consciousness, our inner radiant Self, that aspect of the all-pervading Cosmic consciousness. We are the center of the universe. Nay! We are not only the center of the universe, WE ARE THE UNIVERSE. We are its past and we are its future. Ultimately we are not an individual body with a soul, but a soul with a body. Rather with our own inner Self, that spark of the Divine, we are infinite, ever present and eternal. We are part of the whole, call it God, the Divine-Mother, Shiva-Shakti, Brahman or Primal Being. No doubt, we have come a long way from the Primal Being. The branches and leaves may be far from the roots, but it is to the roots that they owe their existence. We have come a long way from our Cosmic roots, nevertheless we are still deeply rooted in that Ever Blissful Infinite Being called God.

If that is so, why do we suffer? Though the Atman is identical to the Brahman who is ever-radiant and blissful, the Jiva (individual) suffers because he is entrapped by the limiting adjuncts (Upadhis) of body and mind. The infinite ***SEEMS to be entrapped by the finite body and mind. Misery is not natural to the Jiva. It comes to experience a state of misery because of its association with a body.

- a. So the cause of misery is a body
- b. The body (birth) is due to karma (previous actions)
- c. Karma arises from attachment and hate, by preference to certain objects and aversion to some.
- d. Attachment and hate arise from Egoism (sense of 'I' and 'Mine')
- e. This Egoism comes from indiscrimination.

f. Indiscrimination, from ignorance of your true nature, that you are one with the Brahman

Any of the reasons cited (in various contexts) as being the motivation for rebirth, are all covered under some stage of the above- explained process. For instance take the desire for something as a cause of birth as some members were discussing in earlier posts. It is already covered in point C. "Karma arises from attachment and hate, by preference to certain objects and aversion to some". So the desire to "enjoy more whiskey" is nothing but an attachment, a preference for a particular object. So this results in Karma (Karma can be mental, verbal or actual deed (thought, word and deed). Karma results in birth. So in that sense your desire makes you take birth again.

Thus, the root cause of all suffering and Karma is ignorance. The only way to go beyond this, is to bring the light of knowledge. The first step in this direction is to change one's attitude, to retrace one's steps along the same path that we have come down. In other words, the only solution is to go back to our cosmic roots, to become one with the Cosmic Consciousness. That is liberation, moksha, salvation, whatever you call it. We are born so that we can exhaust our karmic debts, so that we may be free. This is the only answer, the only purpose of being born again and again, and thus the purpose of life too, in a general sense. Here the Yogic tradition offers a few paths to suit the varying temperaments. Thus the goal is to manifest the potential Divinity, to attain Oneness with the Whole, the Cosmic. Do it by Work (Karma), Worship (Bhakti/divine love), Meditation (Raja yoga) or Knowledge (Gnana). To say that any one path is the only way, is nothing but ignorance. To each according to our temperaments. But in reality we all might need a little of each path with a predominant need for one.

Jyotish is the light that reveals more clearly, this great truth to us so, that we may be free. A sincere study of Jyotish can be a great spiritual education, a Sadhana in itself, for it partly reveals the eternal mysteries of the cosmos to us. It leads us to the unknown through the known. It guides us out through the intricate labyrinth that life is, with its myriad pairs of duality. It shows us the way and ultimately sets us free, by taking us back to our cosmic roots.

But the process is quite complicated, since we live in a world of Duality. The One has become the many. We have come long way from Cosmic Consciousness, the Source or the Roots. And we are all born with an unconscious desire to attain unity with that Source, with the Cosmic (refer to the post on Sacred myth for extracts from Carl Jung's works that tell us that we are born with a desire to know God!). The individual soul seeks its lost (rather forgotten) identity with the Cosmic. **SADHANA AWAKENS THAT MEMORY.**

The journey back to the Cosmic roots can be done by two paths. The Vedantic and the Tantric paths

1. Advaitic/Vedantic: Direct realization of one's true nature by meditation on the Upanisadic Mahavakyas. This is the path of Gnana, true knowledge. The emphasis is on the distinction between the self and non-self. The cause of all misery is traced to ignorance (Agnana) which vanishes only when supreme knowledge dawns. This is the path advised by Advaita, a school of Vedantic thought.

2. Tantric: This path is an indirect one and generally uses a variety of meditations, rituals, symbols etc., for gradual realization. This is the path of technique. Innumerable techniques are there for all kinds of men and women. Since the direct path requires a high

level of spiritual maturity, it is the second path that suits most of us. Reality is grasped by a series of gradual experiences through a process of conceptual and intuitive awareness. Reality is a flow of ever-changing forces. By means of various techniques in accordance with the innate principles of universal harmony, it is possible to absorb the illusoriness of life and transmute it into a Conscious Reality. This is the path of Tantra.

Once again most often we come across various teachers who actually prescribe a mixture of both the direct and the indirect paths. The essence of Tantra is Vedic while the myths and deities are Puranic in origin. Present day Hinduism, it should be noted, is a mixture of all these approaches. In fact, a lot of it is closer to practical tantra than we imagine. The principal Vedic deities like Prajapati, Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma etc., are not really an integral part of popular modern Hinduism. There are almost no temples to these Vedic deities in India today, while all the key deities popular in present day India- like Shiva (the auspicious and the destroyer), Vishnu (the sustainer), Saraswati (patron Goddess of learning), Durga, Kali, Lalita (all aspects of Sakti) who are more Tantric and Puranic in origin- have hundred thousands of temples throughout India. Most of the scriptures today are at root Tantric, if not in source at least in aspiration. It is hard to differentiate between the vedantic and tantric traditions today, in present day Hinduism, as they are intricately woven into each other. To say that Tantra came later and influenced the Vedic (vedantic) tradition, is far from the truth. Both the traditions seem to have existed since ancient times, influencing each other. Today even an orthodox advaitic parampara like the sringeri math, prescribes agamic (tantric) practices for its followers. Thus both the Tantric and Vedic (vedantic) traditions are co-existent and often intricately linked.

Here I should tell you that Jyotish and Tantra (Agama) are also intricately connected. So allow me to tell you more about the much- misunderstood science of Tantra. Yes it is a science, but in a very different way. It is the science of the spirit. The word Tantra is made up of two words: tanoti and trayati. "Tanoti" means to expand to stretch, to extend while "Trayati" means to liberate or free. Therefore Tantra (tan+tra) means to expand one's experience and awareness of everything till all boundaries cease, till our consciousness becomes one with the Cosmic, and thus attain liberation.

Tantra is actually a compendium of many other systems; it encompasses a wide selection of the different aspects of human life. Its nebulous beginnings lie in the mist of pre-historical times. It grew slowly and developed spontaneously as man moved through and lived in the various bygone eons. It was not thrust on man, but developed naturally in response to man's needs, maturing with man as he adapted to new situations and adopted new ways of living. It is a system that adapts according to the needs of the times. In fact, it is a tantric belief that old tantric texts will face away and new ones will always be written to replace them. The essence remains the same, but the expression and relationship to prevalent social conditions will be different. Tantra has changed through the ages, not remaining attached to fixed dogma. It is still growing and adapting itself in the new age, and will continue to mould itself to man's needs in the coming ages.

Tantra teaches knowledge and experience of the macrocosm through the microcosm. It utilizes the material to tune into the non-material, the known to reach the unknown; the manifest to know the un- manifest. It is a science that teaches us how to fully know and use the world we live in, as well as to full in tune with higher consciousness.

Tantra is an open spiritual tradition that accepts all useful practices and insights including the wordly. It is world-affirmative, granting a reality to the external world however, affirming its reality as consciousness. Thus Tantra does not deny the external world as totally non-real. It is sympathetic to the immediate needs. It addresses the more mundane problems, by helping to solve some problems through occult knowledge, and in the process, tries to raise the individual awareness gradually towards the higher, towards a transformation, which is its actual goal. It is the alchemy of transformation- of transforming the lower into the higher. Tantra being essentially a mystic affair, ordinary language cannot express the teaching effectively. Hence a unique style of writing was evolved using "symbolic speech". No doubt, all could read this "Sandha bhasha (often translated as "twilight language"), but few could understand it. This "enigmatic language" (as Burnof referred to) is a distinct feature of Tantra.

Intricately woven into the theory of Tantra is the practical aspect of Tantra as a scientific path. Tantra is concerned with providing us tools to practically experience the truths that Tantra declares. Yantra, mantra and Tantra, the three main aspects of the science, usually go together. The tantra is the teaching and yantras and mantras are its tools. Frequently one comes across another tool of Tantra, which is similar to the Yantra, -the Mandala. Thus Tantra makes use of various tools like mantras, yantras and mandalas. While a yantra is a geometric representation, a mandala is a visual iconographic or pictorial representation of the same energy. The linear designs (yantra) are more common to Hindu Tantra while there seems to be a preference for the Mandala in Buddhist Tantra. But both the mandala and the yantra are seen in Hindu Tantra, the former generally adoring the roofs of sacred places and the latter for ritual worship.

Just as an equation in mathematics is represented by a graph, the mantra can have a corresponding Yantra. The risis of ancient India were able to "see" the truths of the Universe through meditation, and rendered them as mantras and yantras. Most of these patterns reflect either a specific attribute of the Supreme Divinity, or the Divinity in its entirety. The entire phenomena of creation, preservation and destruction are reflected in some of these geometrical patterns. In- fact, these Yantras when constructed accurately, are capable of generating a tremendous force that every time the adept looks at it, he experiences Creation itself!

"As body is to the soul and oil is to the lamp, a yantra is to the deity"

– Kularnava Tantra (V.86)

The yantras are the dwellings of the Gods. The Sanskrit word "Yantra" derives from the root "yam" meaning to sustain, hold or support the energy inherent in a particular object or concept. Simply, a yantra is just an "instrument" or "tool". In the art and science of spirituality, Yantras are tools of transformation, which aid in meditation, heighten awareness and help in a transformation of our energies. Mahat, (Cosmic Intelligence) the greatest casual force, possesses all sound and light forms. Tantra uses its radiance in the form of lines of light to give form (through the yantra) to deities, who often correspond to the possible phases of psychic unfoldment, in the individual soul's journey back to the cosmic source. They are a synthesis and harmony of the diverse and some times conflicting energies of the human psyche.

The gulf between the parent Cosmic consciousness and the individual consciousness disappears with the aid of the Tantric tools. The tools of Tantra help the individual to recover the lost unity and assume the nature of the original Cosmic consciousness. The

tools of Tantra make use of precise, vital images and symbols to awaken the lost memory of our true nature. When this memory is awakened through a series of dreams, visions and other experiences, which the practice of Tantra evokes in the consciousness of man, one realises the identity of his inner self with the whole, eventually melding the cosmos. The images and symbols used by Tantra are not randomly selected, but very precise. Thus when a specific deity or mantra or yantra is chosen by a jyotishi after a careful analysis of the chart, it is like a tailor made plan, a road map, for the individual's journey back to the cosmic roots. Does that mean that one cannot seek to do it in any other way? No. The other paths of Gnana (a more direct path that requires a high level of spiritual maturity), or Karma (Work done with a Nimitta bhava, without attachment to results), or Meditation, or Bhakti (spiritual love/devotion), are all good. But as stated earlier, the path of technique is said to be the easiest. The ishta devata or any deity selected, is also part of the same scientific process. (please refer my other post on sacred myth and archetypes for an explanation of the various forms of gods with reference to archetypes and Carl Jung's views).

Guess I have to stop writing now. I will end this post by reiterating what I said earlier. A sincere study of Jyotish can be a great spiritual education, a Sadhana in itself, for it partly reveals the eternal mysteries of the cosmos to us. It leads us to the unknown through the known. It guides us out through the intricate labyrinth that life is, with its myriad pairs of duality. It shows us the way and ultimately sets us free, by taking us back to our cosmic roots.

Is astrology a science? Why isn't there a consistency in readings?

[Editor: The following is an article by Satya Prakash posted in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep, 2002]

We just cannot compare oranges and apples! Astrology works more from a psycho-spiritual basis and not a Newtonian-Cartesian view of the world. Gravitation, Electromagnetism etc will not be able to explain the basis of astrology. Astrology is a spiritual science and it is good not to resort to the physical sciences to see the basis or scientific explanations as far as astrology is concerned. While modern science is wonderful in its own ways (I myself hail from a medical background), it is far from a stage where it can explain the subtle phenomena fully. Would you try to attempt explaining the influence a woman that you were in love with, exercised over you through gravitation or electro-magnetism or any physical science in a satisfactory way? While the feeling of love can be explained by biochemistry and neurobiological sciences, breaking it down to hormones and a few chemicals is an intellectually poor way of approaching it. A humanistic psychologist wouldn't agree with this!

While some theories of Modern physics are useful in understanding some fragments of astrology, I wouldn't advise even that, because it is just a case of apples and oranges. Moreover such theories are useful only for comparison and reference. Modern psychology **occasionally comes near, only near a similar approach. In this regard, Carl Jung's works are among the best. Modern science is undoubtedly far ahead of the old Newtonian and Cartesian paradigm. But it hasn't fully understood and hence cannot explain psycho-spiritual phenomena satisfactorily. It is very difficult to tell where the body ends and the mind begins, or where the mind ends and the spirit begins. It is impossible to draw watertight compartments and say that this is physics, and this psychology, and this, transpersonal psychology, and so on. Why, for that matter, it is not

even easy to draw a line between the non-living and living (read the works of brilliant scientists like the late Jagadish Chandra Bose for a sample of that)! Doesn't the consciousness of an observer influence the experiment with seemingly lifeless particles? Life, Mind, Consciousness, Soul etc still baffle the scientist and the poet.

How and why astrology works could be the subject matter of a full book and still be left only partially answered. I was a topper in my student days (not just in India, even here in Australia). Through out my college days, I would come back from an ashram or a journey for my own personal studies, just three days before the final exams and still top in some subjects at least (that too with a low percentage of attendance, which is strictly considered in most medical universities). And I used to walk away with a prize, in literally every competition that I would get into. With such academic background, if you ask me which is the most intellectually stimulating and vastest subjects of study, I would say 'astrology' and the other allied ancient Indian arts and sciences.

Astrology can be quite complex. To me medicine seems far less complex than astrology. The subtleties and nuances of astrology can at times be quite intricate. Such a subject can be easily misunderstood and misrepresented. And add to all this, that no licensing or registration is required! That gives a scope for anybody with little or pretentious knowledge to call themselves astrologers. So the plight of astrology in general, apart from a lack of research and support. Many others on this list, like Sri Sanjay ji and Narasimha ji are from very good educational, intellectual and professional backgrounds. They are all very knowledgeable and deeply into astrology. I am sure that none would approve an attempt to explain astrology from a so-called 'scientific view' at the moment, especially with reference to the physical sciences. I wrote all this, because there were references to science, engineering backgrounds and an attempt to explain astrology through gravitation, electro-magnetic forces/fields etc. At the moment it would be advisable to refrain from understanding oranges, with a knowledge of apples.

As far as I am concerned, physics, philosophy, psychology, art, medicine and poetry, all are various attempts to understand and describe the One that became the Many. And they are all wonderful, in that they seek to understand and thus see different facets. There is a meeting point between all these subjects, cross-roads where they all have to meet. It is here that Astrology stands, at this meeting point. For the time-being, I will stop here and proceed to something of more immediate relevance- your chart. Hopefully, if time permits, later I will try to post articles on astrology, psychology and science in general. But now let me address the chart itself.

Some inconsistencies often arise from the astrologer's poor understanding of the subject and the chart. But in this case, I do not see much inconsistency, at least as far as Sri Narasimha and Mr. Katti Narahari's analysis is concerned. Both have a point to make. Since you haven't given Sri Rohini Ranjan Bose's astrological reasons, I cannot say much about that. And I will add a little to enhance the understanding.

What are the factors that one would analyze married life from?

1. The 7th house and lord.
2. Upapada (very important and unfortunately often neglected)
3. The lagna, second, fourth and twelfth houses and lords too have a bearing.
4. Venus
5. Navamsa
6. There are other divisional charts like the Shastyamsa,

Navamsa-Dwadasamsa or Nava-Dwadasamsa that could be used for all predictions in general.

All these factors influence the marriage and married life. But to cut it short, I will touch upon the most important points as relevant to your question- MARS being bad.

1. The Upapada lagna in this chart is in Aries. As its lord, Mars in the sixth there-from is not good.

2. Moreover the Upapada lagna has Rahu in it. Against this background, Sri Narasimha's point on the Moola dasa of Rahu, makes good sense. It should be mentioned that Moola dasa or Lagna kendradi graha dasa, is a very important dasa, other than Vimsottari and Kalachakra dasas. The very fact that Kalyana Verma devotes and names an entire chapter to this dasa in his text 'Saravali', is proof of its importance. Yet the Vimsottari Mars dasa, too should enable one to see the problem quite clearly.

3. Rahu in the Upapada has none other than Mars as his dispositor. And as already mentioned, this Mars is in the sixth from the Upapada.

4. Such a Mars is in the lagna in the Navamsa! Mars in navamsa lagna is not at all a nice placement for married life.

5. A very BASIC but important point that is grossly underestimated is the dispositor or sign lord. It is a well known principle that a planet in it's enemy's sign will not give good results. This principle is more true for Mars. Mars in its bitter enemy Mercury's sign Virgo, has seldom given good results, especially when backed by other factors.

NOTE: In fact, I had noticed how the enmity of Mars for Mercury works, in many charts. The relationship of Mars and Mercury has been a very interesting principle that surfaced time and again among other factors, in a study that I have done on the charts of serial killers and mass murderers. I will soon write an article based on the study, since it highlights many interesting ideas/principles of Jyotish.

But getting back to THIS chart, I SHOULD HASTEN TO ADD that the reference to the study was only to drive home the importance of the fact that Mars is in the inimical Virgo. Hope my reference is not taken in any other sense. A very basic thing that astrologers often neglect is the sign dispositor of a planet. And as I already said, this principle works more with Mars, especially when backed by other factors. If one wants to be reminded of how important this principle is, one only needs to look at Venkatesa's 'Sarvartha Chintamani' for this.

While Mars is all-important in Nature's survival mechanism as the principle of 'healthy aggression' without which life is impossible, there is another side to it. How do you expect Mars the soldier, to react in an enemy camp? It just *irritates him. Isn't it common that even nice people can be aggressive when they are fighting against a so-called enemy country? When challenged, the hidden traits/powers can surface. Likewise, Mars in Virgo, his enemy's camp, brings to the surface the hidden weaknesses (sometimes even the strengths), externalizing the hidden aggressive qualities or weaknesses of the chart, of even a well-placed Mars. And in this chart, as far as marriage, relationship, and fights are concerned, Mars (in view of the already mentioned factors) would prove negative.

The 19th chapter of Sarvartha Chintamani is very interesting in this regard. In the 22nd chapter, where the author gives the results of Mars dasa, enemies, sorrow, wrath of government, opposition from own people, loss of wealth/property, spouse etc are mentioned apart from disease, for the dasa of Mars occupying the sign of his bitter enemy. My point here is not to take the words literally, but understand the principle

behind. The classics have to be studied with an open mind, not for the literal meaning, but for the principles behind. Then a study of the classics is highly rewarding.

But is it all bad news? No. Other factors, which I am not discussing due to lack of time, indicate that it is not totally negative for other things, though it will prove troublesome. Mars is in a benefic shastyamsa as well. On the overall, while the period would prove very bad for marriage, and very challenging in other areas like work, confrontations and possible illness/accident/surgery at least moderately, it will actually help in the externalization of the hidden weaknesses, bring very challenging situations, afford a chance for introspection, and eventually see you resolve some of the weaknesses/negative traits. And yes, you will also buy and landed property/house during this period, and change residence too.

And most important, a lesser known side of Mars. It can give the ability to penetrate deeply into any abstruse subject, giving insights of a very deep nature. No doubt Mars is the sword, the razor sharp blade. The scorching Martain fire can be transformed into the fire of knowledge. The blade of Mars can be the razor sharp discrimination that cuts across ignorance. Is not Kartikeya, the main deity for Mars, also considered the embodiment of knowledge? To how many devotees did he not grant the ultimate gnana? Is not Mars called Mangala, the auspicious? It is this side of Mars that you could awaken in your life, with an honest and dispassionate approach, with introspection, efforts and some sadhana, given the overall nature of the chart.

As far as the remedial measures are concerned, I will leave that for others, with just one observation. Some of the remedies suggested are good in that they might reduce the suffering. But tell me, if you had a headache regularly for a long time, would you just control the symptoms by taking an aspirin, or would you try to see if there is something else like migraine or a cyst or tumor at the root of the repeated headaches? While some remedies treat the symptom, some go further into the mechanism too. But the best of all, aim at the roots- A CHANGE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. Rather than stressing on the negative karma, why not see the roots from where those karmic PATTERNS repeatedly spring from.

You know, the seventh house and first house are very interesting. The first is 'YOU' as you are. No doubt the seventh is your partner. But it reflects something more than that. The first and seventh (or for that matter any pair of opposite houses) have the principle of polarity. They are opposites and thereby attract each other and enchant each other. No doubt the dissimilarities can be bothersome, but they are COMPLEMENTARY. The seventh actually brings what we need to incorporate in ourselves, to be more complete. It is what you need to complement yourself with, to achieve a more complete existence. Thus the partner (7th house) is a mirror of ourselves. The others only reflect my own weaknesses- where I need to focus really. At a mundane level, while the partner can often initiate a problem, at a deeper level, we attract to ourselves such partners who mirror the seventh house principle, of course when we share some karmic debt with them (good or bad). That is perhaps true of every person whom we meet or interact with. The 'OTHER' (7th house) can be a mirror, if only we are ready to look honestly. The seventh house and the experiences it brings, only symbolize those ASPECTS OF OURSELVES, WHENEVER THE OUTER WORLD COMES REALLY CLOSE TO US. It may be the

other person (7th house), but after all it is MY CHART. So I would advise any remedy/counseling/activity that moves in the direction of a change of consciousness, wherein lie the roots. Life is nothing but a dance towards order, perfection and harmony. Note: I haven't even touched some other factors such as the role of Mars as the lagna lord, or Sun in the 7th etc since I cannot write a full analysis of the chart in the short time. I tried to actually address your main question that you raised earlier as to why Mars dasa is bad for you and also about the seeming inconsistencies. Astrology is a vast ocean and the techniques are innumerable, like the waves. Each astrologer approaches it with his own methodology, a comprehensive set or system of techniques. Even the same astrologer uses different techniques and methodologies at different times in his life, to analyze a chart. It depends on his mental state and dasas. There is no inconsistency in this, or the subject itself. But it is very important that whatever the methodology, the BASIC PRINCIPLES of astrology should be employed CORRECTLY with a CLEAR UNDERSTANDING of how they work. Different methodologies are not mutually exclusive, but are complementary. The more composite, the approach, the clearer the picture. Now I really need to go for my lunch as it is already very late!

Fixing a Muhurta - an outline of the steps involved

[Editor: The following is an article posted by Satya Prakash in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep, 2002]

Sometime back, immediately after an OZCVA monthly meeting, a student who seemed to have been learning the subject for a few years came to me with a doubt, just to see if her method of fixing a muhurta needed any finishing touches. I looked into her notes and was shocked to say the least. She had done a mix of one 'system' and another 'paddhati' on which she had a miserly sprinkling of few other jyotish principles! That was her way of fixing a muhurta. There was no systematic and consistent method there. It betrayed her ignorance of the fundamentals of jyotish in its pure form. It is perhaps for reasons like this, that genuine lovers of traditional jyotish are allergic to such methodologies. No man's methodology, whatever its advantages, can replace or stand up to the ocean of Jyotish. A wave just cannot replace the ocean. While I had always been open to testing any methodology outside conventional jyotish, I was always aware that the authors of such paddhatis/systems claimed unreasonable things at times. I never took their criticism about traditional astrology seriously. But a beginner takes them too seriously and misses out on a large and substantial part of the learning process. Such rebel or non-traditional methodologies may perhaps be fine for discussion with a well-grounded astrologer. But it is a very good idea for a beginner to stick to traditional, so as to avoid the common pitfalls. The average learner tries various methods with partial knowledge, hops from one author to the other, manages to catch pieces of information from each place and person, and eventually tries to make sense of those fragments. The result? His knowledge of astrology is quite often a mass of ideas-undigested, unassimilated and unharmonised - running riot in his mind!

The process of selecting an auspicious moment to start any activity, is quite complex and needs a very good knowledge of Jyotish. Perhaps it is here that a vedic astrologer's actual acid test is. A large proportion of the self-styled vedic astrologers are ignorant of even the basics of fixing a muhurta. If one wants to learn pure Jyotish first without any corruptions by the many so called researches, paddhatis and systems, if one wants to see how much one knows or has understood jyotish truly, before attempting to practice jyotish, one

should really try his or her hand at muhurta. Jataka and Prasna have both been through certain influences of other schools of thought over the years. But Muhurta is perhaps the only area which has maintained its vedic origins and form intact over the thousands of years. Moreover the original purpose for which the vedic seers used a knowledge of astronomy, the main purpose for which vedanga jyotisa was evolved, is to time the various rituals in tune with the cosmic influences, in order to go with the flow of the cosmic currents. Since a good muhurta will ensure optimum outcome for the desired activity, the principles behind muhurta, are largely useful in deciding the outcome of any moment, based on an analysis of the quality of the moment or quality of the time. Since a natal chart is also a moment in time, the same principles are actually at work in Jataka too. It is for this reason that I would urge every sincere student of jyotish to learn muhurta well and then decide how much he really knows jyotish. But many underestimate the value of Muhurta as a subject in their eagerness to start predicting.

There are many books on this subject in the market. But no book addresses the subject FULLY (even Sri Joshi's book which is the best that I have seen in English, leaves out some important concepts. Moreover it could have been organized better, with more clarity. Yet in my opinion, it is a good book that needs more additions and better editing). Generally in most books, the common topics are dealt with and then the steps in evaluating a muhurta are given. Since muhurta deals with hundreds of principles, one comes to cross-roads many times in fixing an auspicious moment. The most common questions that students ask are: Which component of the panchanga (pancha + anga =five limbs/components) is more important? What is the order of priority? Which one should be given preference? Is there a QUANTITATIVE way of justifying the choice of one muhurta over the other? And what of the quality? It is here that an astrologer's grasp of the subject comes across unmistakably.

The various components have a degree of preference/priority. There are quantitative as well as qualitative methods that are part and parcel of electing an auspicious moment. Since the subject is vast, I will outline the process in a very very skeletal manner in this post first. Later as time permits, I will expand upon various areas for the students. In fact when I outlined the whole subject with headings, side headings, key words, tables etc and left gaps for explanations to be inserted later, the file came to four hundred pages. This post may not teach you muhurta really, especially the beginner. But the student who has been around for sometime, can check his knowledge and see how much of what is given below, is already part of his practice.

I will simplify and outline the steps in fixing a muhurta now. I can expand them in later posts whenever possible. Other learned members may also expand on the topics if they wish to. I am dividing the process into various steps for convenience and clarity.

STEPS IN FIXING A MUHURTA:

A. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:

1. General for any purpose on any chart

There are many doshas that an astrologer seeks to avoid in the muhurta chart, irrespective of the specific activity and individual chart, for which he is doing the job. After eliminating maximum number of doshas stated in the list, one should check for the malefic combinations that prevail due to the combinations of various components of the Panchanga. Malefic combinations are avoided while the presence of benefic combinations is preferred. A list of these is given later at the end.

2. Specific to the individual chart

** Chandra bala (natal moon check)

** Tara bala (strength of star)

After eliminating all malefic days in a particular period, we get some days free from those effects. With those days in hand we move on from the preliminary analysis to the main step of fixing the muhurta now.

B. MAIN ANALYSIS

Till now we have only avoided or eliminated certain days etc. Hereafter we will actually evaluate and consider certain days and ascendants for the muhurta. This involves the following steps:

1. Finding the days having the suitable combination of the five components (pancha + anga= five limbs/components).
2. Finding a suitable ascendant depending upon the activity.
3. Ensuring the Strength and Appropriateness of Dasa,antardasa, and Significator of the activity
4. Finding the most auspicious moments within the ascendant chosen/ Amsha charts etc
5. Miscellaneous/Special considerations for various activities like marriage etc

Now I will outline and enumerate these steps below.

1. Finding the days having the suitable combination of the five components:

The first and the foremost requirement to fix a muhurta is the availability of the suitable five components. Depending upon the activity we first check whether the five components of panchanga, prevailing on the days free from malefic effects, suit the activity for which the muhurta is desired. The process of evaluating those energies is part of the initial evaluation. It is a process of choosing a good lunar day, weekday, Constellation, yoga and Karana.

The marks allotted are as follows:

Lunar day = 1,

Weekday = 8,

Constellation = 4

Yoga = 32,

Karana = 16

Chandrabala = 100

Tarabala = 60

Now we move to the second step.

2. Fixing a suitable ascendant depending upon the activity:

Depending upon the nature of the activity, one should choose fixed, dual or movable signs as ascendants. After fixing a particular ascendant we should make sure of its strength and check whether it is free from certain malefic effects. This process can further be divided into three stages.

- a.) Avoiding malefic combinations of the ascendant

The five major malefic effects that we should try to avoid with respect to an ascendant are given below.

** Udayastha shuddhi (Ensuring Benefic Asc and 7th houses)

** Kartari (Malefics Scissoring)

** Bhrgu Shatka (Venus in 6th in fixed sign etc)

** Moon in 6,8,12

** Sagraha Chandra (Conjunctions with Moon)

b.) Quantitative Evaluation of the Ascendant

This is a process of checking the placement of planets with respect to that ascendant to make sure they add strength. For that we have two main methods that are quantitative (marks can be allotted). They are:

** Panchestika evaluation-----

In this step, we check whether the five important planets in the muhurta chart are well placed. The five important planets that should be happy are: the lord of time (kaladhipa), ascendant lord, Jupiter, Moon and Sun. These planets are, in other words, like five bricks (panchestika) that support a wall and make it strong.

** Vimshopaka evaluation-----

This is *DIFFERENT from the Vimshopaka bala of varga charts. This is more like RASI BALA in that it allots points based on the positions of various planets in houses/rasis in the rasi chart. Each planet is decided to give positive, negative or neutral results depending upon its placement from the lagna. This varies from activity to activity, as each activity needs a different kind of energy.

3. Ensuring the Strength and Appropriateness of Dasa, antardasa, and Significator of the activity:

After evaluating the ascendant in the above two ways we then check whether the signification house and the planet pertaining to the activity are happy; if possible, the dasa and the antara dasa lords should also be well placed in the chart.

4. Finding the most auspicious moments within the ascendant chosen/ Amsha charts etc:

After making sure that we have an auspicious lagna in hand we proceed to other subtle factors, which play an important role in the auspiciousness of a muhurta. For this, we use varga or divisional charts. Main points checked in this stage are:

** Papa shadvarga

** Pushkaramsa

** Kunavamsa

** Shodasa or Shadvargas (whichever is feasible)

Now I will enumerate the most important doshas to be avoided in the preliminary analysis. Hope you remember that I skipped this enumeration there to do list them here. This is actually part of the preliminary analysis.

Preliminary Doshas and malefic considerations

1. Combustion
2. Jupiter in Leo
3. Jupiter in Capricorn
4. Solar ingress
5. Adhika masa
6. Kshaya masa
7. Eclipse
8. Kakracha yoga
9. Samvartaka yoga
10. Dagdha yoga
11. Madhusarpisha yoga
12. Hatashana yoga

13. Dagdha yoga
14. Yamghantha yoga
15. Kaal danda yoga
16. Dhumra yoga
17. Dhwansha yoga
18. Vajra yoga
19. Mudgara yoga
20. Padma yoga
21. Lumba yoga
22. Utpaata yoga
23. Mrityu yoga
24. Kaana yoga
25. Musala yoga
26. Gada yoga
27. Maatanga yoga
28. Raksha yoga
29. Gandantas
30. Masa-shoonya tithis
31. Masa shoonya Nakshatras
32. Masa shoonya rashis
33. Tithi shoonya rashis
34. Tithi shoonya Nakshatras
35. Tithi shoonya lagna
36. Tripushkara yoga
37. Dwipushkara yoga
38. Panchaka
39. Baana
40. Adal yoga
41. Vidal yoga
42. Afflicted constellations
43. Parva tithis
44. Galgraха tithis
45. Dagdha tithis
46. Chidra tithis

As already stated earlier, in expanding the above outlined steps, points and considerations, one may end up with a four hundred page file. Instead of doing that, we could expand upon selected topics as required. Learned members on this list could also take up various topics. I will end this post by reiterating that knowledge of muhurta is a must to be a complete astrologer. A thorough understanding of the principles of Muhurta can actually help an astrologer appreciate the principles of traditional predictive astrology (Jataka) better and thereby make a better astrologer. In one of my next posts I might introduce the five limbs/components of the panchanga/calendar, as also other variables like ayana, masa, etc for the benefit of a beginner.

Clearing a few myths about Cloning!!!

[Editor: The following is an article by Satya Prakash posted in vedic-astrology yahoo group in Dec, 2002]

While I could write a hundred pages discussing cloning, genome, DNA, astrology, Nature vs Nurture etc, I will do a most needed simple thing in this post- An attempt to clear away certain myths about what cloning is and what it is not! And in as simple and as short explanations as possible. Read on.

To start with Identical twins are very different from clones. And neither of them poses a threat to the rationale behind astrology, especially the clones.

Identical twins: The story starts with ONE egg, which DIVIDES AND THEN both parts of the egg evolve into separate human beings. Scientists don't fully understand as to why the egg divides. Sexual reproduction is involved in this case.

Cloning: In contrast, Cloning is a form of Asexual production (contrast it with **sexual **reproduction as in the case of identical twins). Unlike a twin, a clone will carry the genome of only ONE PARENT (or donor). While identical twins are GENETICALLY IDENTICAL and have the same genome, clones share the same nuclear DNA only. They DO NOT SHARE THE SAME MITOCHONDRIAL DNA. But identical twins share even this. Cutting the scientific jargon, let me just tell you the IMPLICATIONS in a layman's language.

In spite of sharing the same mitochondrial DNA too, it is well known that Identical twins are neither physically nor behaviorally identical to each other. They differ in their belief systems and values as well as preferences (may I use the word Samskaras here for all such innate differences?).

If this is the case with identical twins who share even the mitochondrial DNA, it doesn't need a Watson to guess what the case would be with clones who do NOT share the mitochondrial DNA and just share the nuclear DNA.

But getting back to the identical twins (because they seemingly pose a more SEEMINGLY valid threat to astrology's rationale), let me acquaint you with the Nature vs Nurture debate. There are two major camps here.

CAMP ONE: Holds that Human behaviour is PRIMARILY genetic. Main proponents: Lorenz, Barash Wilson, Dawkins, Lumsden and Wilson, and Trivers. All of them use various ARGUMENTS and try to convince us that human behavior is PRIMARILY genetic. And Hamilton, Maynard Smith and Axelrod give the theoretical support for it.

CAMP TWO: Holds that Human behavior is PRIMARILY environmental. Main promoters: The Boston group, Schwartz, Gould, Sahlins and Dawkins.

Both camps have their own arguments. I am sometimes tempted to believe that our behavior is PRIMARILY genetic. Yet the Environmental camp has some valid points to make. Even otherwise, if you have noticed I have typed in capitals the word PRIMARILY. So even if one camp succeeds in convincing a majority (highly doubtful as it goes deeper than that. Past experience with historical events suggests that scientific beliefs and paradigms too shift according to Cultural and Political SWINGS or CYCLES or whatever.) So I repeat that even if one camp succeeds in convincing a majority, then too the story is not about the WHOLE PICTURE, because the other factor becomes SECONDARY, which means that it still has a PROBABILITY. So we may rest content that the debate will probably never end. Just as in most philosophical debates, each time and culture favors one argument which will be replaced by the opposite at another time and under another cultural influence.

Simply put, both have their roles to play. The argument is only about who gets the PRIMARY role. Astrology or rather Metaphysics provides the link as well as the

deciding factor, the missing angle. Why are identical twins (I will not discuss the clones as they deserve even less attention in our argument) different in their belief systems, values, preferences etc? Is there something else too other than Nature vs Nurture? Or is there something that links them both meaningfully?

Bringing my earlier point about Samskaras (individual preferences, belief systems and values), we as astrologers know that samskaras (character) are largely reflective of the SANCHITA, while the chart itself reveals mostly Prarabdha, though it may be possible to catch the faintest glimpse of character in the chart, at least character in the sense of Sanchita karmas's resultant Samskaras. Even in the case of NEAR-IDENTICAL CHARTS, I for one believe that it is FUTILE to attempt proving the differences between twins' lives using shastiamsas, sublords, or even sub-sublords!

Birth charts reflect only Prarabdha, that too in a SYMBOLIC way. Human mind cannot understand SYBOLISM FULLY, for the day it understands, all distinction between the OBSERVED AND THE OBSERVED ceases. And the observer just will not tell us the result because he LOSES himself in the ONE. Yet for theoretical purpose let me clarify further. Even if it is possible to understand the symbolism of astrology (and thereby an individual's prarabdha), we are totally dark in the most important area- SANCHITA KARMAS. And Samskaras are based on Sanchita karma. Our actions, reactions and choices are based as much (if not more) on our Samskaras as on Prarabdha.

If I give two people exactly the same BMWs. Can you tell me how they would drive? No. Because the DRIVERS are different. No doubt the man with a BMW COULD (that too if he is an accomplished driver) better with than if he were given a Hyundai Accent. But with the same car, different drivers drive differently. In the hands of a novice a BMW could be even dangerous!

All the while, we do not seem to remember that though the charts are SEEMINGLY similar, THE DRIVERS (SOULS) ARE DIFFERENT. THEIR CHARACTERS ARE DIFFERENT. THEIR SANCHITA KARMAS ARE DIFFERENT AND THUS THEIR SAMSKARAS TOO.

As for the clones, they definitely do not merit even a discussion, much less a debate! The genome is not deterministic of many significant physical and behavioral characteristics, because the environment acts upon the genetic POTENTIAL in some manner. And the poor Clone is in a different environment from his parent (technically the donor).

Logically it is impossible to provide the same environment and parental influences etc as his donor/parent had. But as I said earlier, even in the case of identical twins, because of the samskaras and sanchita being different (or putting simply, the soul being different), I for one cannot treat it as an enigma to astrology. The enigma is in the mind, like all other illusion. Guess this clarifies some myths about clones, though like all philosophical debates, the one on identical twins could be carried on if the mind wants to chatter. And Yeah, chattering is fun at times...Interesting as well!

Historical question on Vedic Astrology

[Editor: The following is an edited version of a conversation happened in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Jan, 2003]

Sundeep (vedicastrostudent):

I quite accidentally drifted upon this article:

http://www.astro.com/people/hand_his_e.htm

which quite authoritatively seems to recognize that there is only a single origin of astrology and that is in Mesopotamia (current Iraq) in the 2500 BC timeframe, from where it moved to Egypt, and then Greece, and then was introduced into India, where it may have additionally and significantly evolved with much Indian input. The main evidence is the use of Greek terms in Sanskrit which are presumably guaranteed to be of Greek origin - thereby forcing the conclusion that the knowledge came from Greece to India not the other way around.

This brings up the question (I know a lot of you have significant historical knowledge since you frequently debate the birth time of Sri Krishna):

What is the oldest Indian astrological text and when was it written? Is it BPHS? Does it use the Greek terms mentioned in the above article and does its timing fit in with the above evidence i.e. was it written after the earliest possible Greek influence?

Narasimha Rao (pvr108):

Archaeology, ancient history and comparative linguistics are not really sciences. They are highly subjective fields where people are normally trying to connect dots and imagining a lot of things. We hardly understand the evolution of civilization. Was there a sophisticated civilization in world at 6000 BCE? History says no, but it could be wrong. Nothing is conclusive in ancient history. In the light of this uncertainty, all the discussions on the origin of astrology are futile (though that doesn't prevent people from attempting it).

It's funny that 95% of the Sanskrit terms quoted in the article you referred to for planets, signs etc are rarely used in Sanskrit texts. In Sanskrit literature, people are not wedded to the concept of fixed names. Sun may be referred to Surya, Aditya, Ravi, Vivavsan, Martanda or many other names (based on which one fits the meter at a particular place). I have seen many names of Sun used by Parasara, but I don't think I read anywhere in BPHS where Sun was referred to as Heli, Venus as Asphujit, Mercury as Hermnan etc.

Overall, I think this particular article is manufacturing a lot of evidence. If one talks about panaphara, apoklima etc, the point is reasonable. But the author is giving obscure Greek-derived Sanskrit names of all planets and signs, which are not so commonly used in astrological literature (definitely not in BPHS). They may have certainly come to Sanskrit long after Parasara. That doesn't prove anything.

This approach of looking at word similarities can be misleading. Similarity can work in both the directions. Similarity can also mean that Greeks learnt from Hindus and contributed back some research. The sophistication and the complexity of the teachings of Parasara is perhaps 1000 times more developed than Greek astrology of 400 BCE (or even Indian astrology of the same time). TO ME, it is silly to suggest that Parasara's teachings came from Greeks. Parasara's teachings must've decayed over several millennia/centuries and a fresh impetus from some Greek/Hindu astrologers must've resulted in a rebuilding activity. Between the times of Parasara/Jaimini and the time of Hindu-Greek collaboration, some decay must've taken place, as Kali was setting in.

Dr Satya Prakash Chawdhary (satyaprakasika):

Quote

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Unquote

The Greek-derived Sanskrit names have probably little or nothing to do with Parasara. If my memory is right most of them were introduced by VARAHAMIHIRA who admired the yavanas and referred frequently to them. It remains a different matter though whether BPHS was really authored 5000 years back or was compiled by some inspired writer much later.

I don't know about terms like Kendra. Some suggest that even this word has no root word in Sanskrit. Then Parasara too will be dragged into this. Perhaps Narasimha ji can research on this (since you are much better than others with respect to Sanskrit on this list) and tell us more.

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Quote

This approach of looking at word similarities can be misleading. Similarity can work in both the directions. Similarity can also mean that Greeks learnt from Hindus and contributed back some research.

Unquote

There are many things in Greek astrology that Indian astrology does not have. But as I said, the only reasonable thing to say is that there *could have been a *mutual influence, not that either is derived wholly or largely from the other.

Quote

The sophistication and the complexity of the teachings of Parasara is perhaps 1000 times more developed than Greek astrology of 400 BCE (or even Indian astrology of the same time).

Unquote

1000 TIMES IS AN EXAGGERATION to say the least. Of course Parasara is the probably the greatest among many. One just has to be awe struck within the *Indian context. But your above statement only suggests that you have NOT

studied Greek astrology at all. Ancient Greek astrology is as sophisticated and as complex as Indian.

The dashas? The shadbalas? The fixed stars? The divisional charts? They too had all that, with a few variations! While they don't have Ashtakavarga we too don't have a lot that they had. Their fixed stars are much more complex than our *current texts on nakshatras.

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Unquote

But this is true for the Greek sages too. The texts that are around are not the only ones. They are also constantly discovering more about their ancients. So the same argument could be extended to the Greeks too that a lot of their ancient teachings have been lost. And it is kind of true. Their mythology is as fascinating and deep as ours. Infact their mythology about Mercury is much more helpful ASTROLOGICALLY, than ours (at least my opinion).

They too had a philosophical and spiritual basis for astrology. They too have a similar grand view of astrology. The ancient Greeks too spoke of fate and prarabdha, gnana and agnana, and the role of astrology as much as we do. The Corpus hermeticum, the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, are all clear about the following (they too speak of previous schools of thought and their sages just as we do).

According to them the soul descends into matter from the higher worlds and that by its descent into matter, it is subject to the limitations of 'Moira', the Greek word for fate or whatever. The descent occurs through different stages, first the UNDIFFERENTIATED, then through the sphere of the fixed stars, and eventually through the seven planetary spheres.

What is striking here is that they hold that the soul is subject to "heimermane" only from the sphere of Saturn (remember our lokaloka mountains beyond Saturn?) Heimermane means "that which has already been allotted". Sounds familiar? It is very much the same as our prarabdha. Now the soul is increasingly subject to the natural law and is constrained by moira more as it descends down through the remaining spheres.

The soul descends because of agnoia or ignorance. The soul learns the lessons through pronoia (i.e. acceptance of the planetary energies and Natural law, something akin to the bhakta's surrender to God). The goal is Gnosis (knowledge) and removal of Agnosis (ignorance). That again sounds like Vedanta with even the terms being similar.

Gnosis: Gnana

Agnosis: Agnana

There is a lot more. But I do not have much time. All I would say is it is unfair to say that Greek astrology is not as sophisticated or complex as Hindu astrology. It is a different matter though about how exactly they influenced each other or

whether they had similar origins or whatever. I would remain NEUTRAL and take no sides. Of course I identify more with Hinduism. But that does not prevent me from either appreciating or studying other schools of thought. As I always say, KNOWLEDGE is not any single country or race or culture's exclusive domain. Neither is any one superior. It is only that each of us is acquainted with one school deeply and get attached to it. All Knowledge is Saraswati. And a Mother is a Mother, no matter what. As the Devi Mahatmyam affirms:

ya devi sarvabhutesu buddhirupens samsthita
namastasyai namastasyai namastasya namo namah

To the Goddess who is present in all creatures as Intelligence Salutations to Her. Salutations to Her. Salutations to Her Again and again.

Sudeep (vedicastrostudent):

Thank you for your replies, PVRji and Satyaji,

I understand both your points. However, I do not think the writer of the article disputes that there is a lot of ORIGINAL "research" in Vedic astrology. He does seem to claim that the "seed" was planted by Greek influence - after which he says or implies that a "period of isolation" allowed Indians to germinate the original seed.

In my viewpoint, the proof that the original "seed" was Greek can logically only be concluded if ALL of the following conditions are satisfied:

- 1) The oldest Indian astrological text is available WITH ITS ORIGINAL text.
(Parenthetically, if this text is BPHS - do we know for a fact that it has been passed down unchanged over the generations?)
- 2) This original text contains terms that are the same as of contemporary Greek languages.
- 3) These terms are verifiably of independent and (uninfluenced) Greek origin
(PVRji also pointed out that this has to be proven).

Only you Gurus who can read the original Sanskrit can answer points 1 and 2.

Dr Satya Prakash Chawdhary (satyaprakasika):

I had so far read only your and PVNRji's posts on this and the general line of thought and fragments of the article referred to and your comments on them. My reply was with reference to those fragments and PVNR's views because I am reasonably conversant with some other schools of astrology as well to follow their contentions. I have come across other articles on this kind of issues though. I will read the actual article now.

Narasimha Rao (pvr108):

Quote

The Greek-derived Sanskrit names have probably little or nothing to do with Parasara. If my memory is right most of them were introduced by VARAHAMIHIRA who admired the yavanas and referred frequently to them.

Unquote

Yes, you are absolutely right. I hope you agree that Parasara existed way before Varahamihira did, in which case India astrology existed way before the Greek influence.

According to the Robert Hand article quoted by Sundeep, Hindus learnt astrology from Greeks and did not know it until Greeks brought it to them. I was talking about Parasara's texts in that context. Some of these guys say that Parasara came long after Varahamihira (which is what you are hinting at below).

Quote

It remains a different matter though whether BPHS was really authored 5000 years back or was compiled by some inspired writer much later. I don't know about terms like Kendra. Some suggest that even this word has no root word in Sanskrit. Then Parasara too will be dragged into this. Perhaps Narasimha ji can research on this (since you are much better than others with respect to Sanskrit on this list) and tell us more.

Unquote

Yes, I will do some research. But Kendra could easily have been derived from indra or some other word (the indra - greatest and middle point - of a circle). We can only speculate either way.

Quote

Overall, I think this particular article is manufacturing a lot of evidence. If one talks about panaphara, apoklima etc, the point is reasonable.

Yes some parts are reasonable. But it is unreasonable to suggest that Indian astrology is derived fully or even largely from the Greeks, though there is no denial that some MUTUAL influence was there.

Unquote

The issue is - did this mutual influence come after Parasara taught the great science and people almost forgot it or did this mutual influence come at the inception of Hindu astrology. Robert Hand suggests the latter and I firmly believe in the former.

Quote

The sophistication and the complexity of the teachings of Parasara is perhaps 1000 times more developed than Greek astrology of 400 BCE (or even Indian astrology of the same time). 1000 TIMES IS AN EXAGGERATION to say the least. Of course Parasara is probably the greatest among many. One just has to be awe struck within the *Indian context.

But your above statement only suggests that you have NOT studied Greek astrology at all. Ancient Greek astrology is as sophisticated and as complex as Indian.

The dashas? The shadbalas? The fixed stars? The divisional charts? They too had all that, with a few variations! While they don't have Ashtakavarga we too don't have a lot that they had. Their fixed stars are much more complex than our *current texts on nakshatras.

Unquote

Yes, I can "1000 times" is an exaggeration. I can return your compliment by saying "but your above statement only suggests that you have NOT studied Parasara's teachings at all". But I will not get personal like you and will keep the focus on the subject.

Please note that I am not just saying that Parasara's teachings are superior to the Greek astrology of the last two millennia. I am also saying that they are also superior to the Hindu astrology of the last two millennia (as taught by authors from Varahamihira to Mantreswara).

Parasara's teachings are not just about dasas, shadbalas, fixed stars and divisions. If one reads BPHS fully, one can see how complete and brilliant-beyond-words it is compared to ANY OTHER astrological text available today, Greek and Sanskrit.

Regarding the rest of your comments on the similarity between ancient Hindu astrology and ancient Greek astrology - My guess is that civilization existed for a long long time before what we currently know. My guess is that astrological knowledge originated from the same source (which is not Babylon of 2000 BC or Greece of 50 BC, but much earlier) and there was collaboration again around 100 BC-500 AD as several cultures came together again. The similarities in cultures, astrologies and even languages cannot be coincidences. Clearly, there are missing links in the evolution of civilization.

Dr Satya Prakash Chawdhary (satyaprakasika):

I will not address the contents of your mail that I could agree in principle to. I will address those that I either don't agree to, or have something more to add upon.

Quote

Yes, you are absolutely right. I hope you agree that Parasara existed way before Varahamihira did, in which case India astrology existed way before the Greek influence. According to the Robert Hand article quoted by Sundeep, Hindus learnt astrology from Greeks and did not know it until Greeks brought it to them. I was talking about Parasara's texts in that context. Some of these guys say that Parasara came long after Varahamihira (which is what you are hinting at below).

Unquote

One need not even go till Parasara's time to argue that predictive astrology existed in India much before Varahamihira or even the 2-5 AD when astrology (Jataka) re-entered India under Greek influences in whatever form. The Greek influences according to all the western scholars who support that view entered India between 2-5 AD. But even as far back as the 6th century BC one could show the existence of Jataka in India. Asita the court astrologer of Suddhodhana cast the little Siddhartha (would be Buddha)'s chart and predicted two things. So even if someone proves any Greek influences on Jataka or re-entry around 2-5 th AD, they still have a lot more to address about this PRIOR EXISTENCE of Jataka in India.

Oh no you have misunderstood me. When I talk of an inspired writer compiling Parasara's teachings much later around 5th AD or whatever, it is about the TEXT itself. I have no doubts about Rishi Parasara (father of Vyasa) having existed much earlier. Infact I have diligently gone through the Puranas and collected references to him, while writing the story of Vyasa. Moreover Parasara is one of the rishis in the parampara that I belong to. How can I question his existence or the traditionally accepted date for rishi Parasara?

But regarding the *text itself I cannot say if the rishi's teachings were compiled much later or whatever. But then the authoritativeness of the text stands questioned because if a later author could have inserted any words of Greek origin (if at all- this has to be proved after a multi-disciplinary research only; yet no finding can perhaps be conclusive). If words like Kendra or Trikona too stand questioned in addition to Apoklima, Panaphara etc, then it *could be that a later author has either inserted or re-written or compiled the earlier teachings of Parasara. If that be so, how could anyone be sure that this compiler did not add some techniques too?

My main point here is that just because a text says something one cannot be sure of anything definitely as rishi vakya. So except the Veda Samhita (that too only the Samhita), I am not willing to accept anything as definitely unalterable rishi vakyas.

Let me cite one instance. Some research the Puranas for astrological truths because Vyasa being the great seer that he is, they believe that what the puranas reveal must be unquestionable. But this is wrong. Most puranas that we read today have been expanded from their original form. So is the case with the itihasas. The skanda purana that 95% Indians read today is no more considered as the original or older version by Vyasa. A much older and shorter version is in existence. The version found in Nepal and certain other places is the older one. During the golden period of Guptas etc, most puranas were written again. So I cannot accept most texts in their current form as full-fledged rishi vakyas. The case with the Veda Samhita is different. I will write more elaborately on this another day regarding the Veda Samhita's origin being undeniably rishi vakyas.

Quote

Yes, I will do some research. But Kendra could easily have been derived from indra or some other word (the indra - greatest and middle point - of a circle). We can only speculate either way.

Unquote

Please do share your findings/opinions.

Quote

Yes some parts are reasonable. But it is unreasonable to suggest that Indian astrology is derived fully or even largely from the Greeks, though there is no denial that some MUTUAL influence was there.

The issue is - did this mutual influence come after Parasara taught the great science and people almost forgot it or did this mutual influence come at the inception of Hindu astrology. Robert Hand suggests the latter and I firmly believe in the former.

Unquote

Again I have to bring in Asita as an example. As for Robert Hand, he is an authority on western astrology to a certain extent. Though he seems to be acquainted with Vedic astrology, he is not really deep into it to be able to make a judgment. While I admire him for his technical brilliance and intellect with respect to western astrology, his statements only show that his knowledge of Indian astrology is not of an acceptable level. Undoubtedly he has researched into

Arabic, Latin and Greek works and should not "form definite opinions" about Hindu astrology which is not his domain.

Another point I wish to submit is that Robert Hand is an intellectually honest astrologer to a reasonable extent. The article could reflect an earlier opinion. Since I have followed most of his works, I know for sure that he always keeps his mind open and changes his opinion without being biased when the situation demands. If I am not mistaken, of late he seems to be more neutral about the origins of Hindu astrology. He was definitely biased a few years back just as most vedic astrologers are biased against Greek or Arabic astrologies due to less knowledge.

I hope to be able to meet him this year later through a common friend (a western astrologer). If this happens I will be able to ascertain as well as put forward my contentions. But I respect him for his work just as I respect any professional scientist.

Quote

Yes, I can "1000 times" is an exaggeration. I can return your compliment by saying "but your above statement only suggests that you have NOT studied Parasara's teachings at all". But I will not get personal like you and will keep the focus on the subject.

Please note that I am not just saying that Parasara's teachings are superior to the Greek astrology of the last two millennia. I am also saying that they are also superior to the Hindu astrology of the last two millennia (as taught by authors from Varahamihira to Mantreswara).

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Unquote

I am sorry if my expression hurt you. But it was not meant to be personal at all! And on the other hand I should say that you are getting personal now! Calmly let us consider this. Please tell me if you have studied Greek astrology and if so which authors? Ancient or modern? If you haven't studied atleast 30% of their practices, my statement stands true. So there is nothing to feel bad about my observation. If you have studied let us discuss some points to see whether they are even 10 or 50 times less sophisticated than us.

But if you argue that a lot of the original teachings have been lost and the current level of Jyotish is very inferior to the original one due to Kali yuga, then I have something to say. If it is Kali yuga for us, it is Kali yuga for other races too. Even other ancient cultures and races speak of a golden period or Satya yuga and the current Kali yuga in their teachings. They too had their sages. What's more? Some of our saints have been mentioned by them and like wise. To me the word Rishi does not have just an Indian or Aryan or Dravidian or Jain or Parsi connotation. Some of our Puranas speak highly of the Sun-worshippers of Mitraic or Zorastrian practices. The Tamil siddha tradition speaks of a great Chinese siddha.

And I firmly adhere to the Hindu teaching that we are born with three runas or debts. The debt towards the sages (rsi rna) is an important one that I deeply feel

often. That is the reason why I tried to write Vyasa and Parsara's story inspite of the difficultness of the task.

Sharing the wisdom of the sages with others is one way we repay the debt. If not for them, none of us would be discussing all this today. I feel the same way about the sages of other traditions and cultures too because I am firmly convinced of the commonness of humanity, its legacy, its heritage.

Other races and cultures too have had their rishis. They too had great knowledge in the ancient times. And there seems to have been even some connections between all. And logically too, life on this planet (forget human beings alone) cannot have had different origins. We have a common ancestry. Just as all the different states of India are diverse in their own way, but yet united at one level; different ancient races too have a unity. So when you said that Parasara's teachings are 1000 times more complex and sophisticated than Greek astrology, I would defend our Greek cousins, as much as I would defend the Indian contention if I were to meet Robert Hand. But if you say that you are comparing Greek knowledge of 200AD and the original teachings of Parasara, in fairness to the ancient Greeks, I will say that you are putting oranges and apples in the same basket and should not forget that they too believe in their ancient sages and Satya yuga.

Finally Vasishta, Sakti, Parasara, Vyasa and Suka are part of my rishi Parampara. My daily prayers start with chanting the Advaita guru parampara verses. So I worship and love them as much as you may love or defend Parasara. While I love my Guru parampara more, I respect all paramparas and rishis (be they Greek or Zorastrian or Jaina) equally. I will not prolong the discussion.

Manu smriti/progressions/aspects

Dr. Satya Prakash Chawdhary:

You have mentioned the following in your article on Dasamsa.

Quote

Another technique of timing involving the divisional charts is progressions. Progressions are controversial and many Indian astrologers do not approve their use. But some scholars accept it as endorsed by Manu Smriti.

Unquote

I have also read in your posts long back on some occasions that the so called western aspects have been mentioned in Manu smriti.

I would be most interested to see any references regarding the same. Have you yourself read it somewhere? Or have you come across references in someone's works? What is the basis for this? This point is of importance to the comparative histories of western and indian schools of astrology, as it can influence opinions regarding the origins, relations, exchange etc between ancient western and Indian astrologies. Thanks in advance for any useful information.

PVR:

The editor of AM took liberty with my text and changed the phrase "granted by" used by me to "endorsed by". Manu smriti does not explicitly endorse progressions, but only grants a basis for them when it talks about the days of gods

and the days of humans. As explained to me by my guru, this is the basis of progressions.

There was a public discussion of progressions by Pt. Sanjay Rath in the advanced session of the SJVC-West seminar at Ukiah, USA (that is why I too went public with it. Otherwise, I would've kept quiet like I kept quiet on Tithi Pravesha until last May). You may be able to get the CD's in which progressions are discussed by Pt. Rath, from www.srijagannath.org site.

It is my *guess* that most of the basis of western astrology was formed by some Vedic scholars who moved from India to west in ancient times and took with them specialization in some branches of Vedic astrology. Progressions are used in some traditional paramparas (like the one I belong to), but 1 deg per year is not the most famous one. Hope this helps. Sorry, I can't be of much more help!

Dr. Satya Prakash Chawdhary:

Quote

The editor of AM took liberty with my text and changed the phrase "granted by" used by me to "endorsed by". Manu smriti does not explicitly Endorse progressions, but only grants a basis for them when it talks about the days of gods and the days of humans. As explained to me by my guru, this is the basis of progressions.

Unquote

Well in that sense the Tantric works like the Brihad Nila Tantra give a more clearer basis for secondary progressions, by equating a day with an year.

Generally one may be accused of "reading" too much "into" the texts here. While the Tantric texts that deal with occult truths *could perhaps* be used to "derive" such basis, Manu Smriti cannot not be accepted by standard arguments. Since Manu is largely concerned with LAW MAKING and refers to other puranic kind of accounts in different contexts, contextually, I am skeptic towards "reading into the text" what it does not purport to tell. As for the dasamsa progression, there may not be any basis for it really in any Indian TEXT. In all such contexts where the purpose is obviously something else, it is an accepted practice to adopt the following approach.

"tatra hi gauni kalpana sabdasya yatra mukhyartho na sambavati"

"Where literal meaning does not fit in, then alone the metaphorical meaning is to be adopted."

As the Brahma Sutra bhasya tells us, "It is unreasonable to give up the plain meaning of words used and put new meaning in their place"

And most important is the fact that contextually the attributed meaning or derivation has no place at all.

What about the so called "western aspects" having their basis in Manu smriti as you wrote in another context? I am very skeptic if we will find even this kind of (day of the gods and year of humans) basis for it as the ASPECTS will be harder to "read into" any text! May I know the basis (however unacceptable or wildly speculative it may seem) for the aspects in Manu smriti?

Let me clarify my position on the progressions. Jataka as a sastra remains what it is and there may be nothing wrong with borrowing certain ideas from foreign schools of thought, where deemed fit, as long as there is no need to alter the

existing paradigm and framework. I myself use the progressions (both secondary as well as true tertiary) and a few other concepts that are generally not part of mainstream jyotish.

But claiming a foreign concept as our own is unfair, at least as long as some reasonable evidence is not produced.

Quote

It is my *guess* that most of the basis of western astrology was formed by some Vedic scholars who moved from India to west in ancient times and took with them specialization in some branches of Vedic astrology.

Unquote

I cannot agree to this because I have studied modern western as well as Arabic astrologies with the same enthusiasm that I have for Jyotish. Other ancient schools of astrology like the Greek or Babylonian have also left many fragments intact atleast to the extent that one may study their general framework to some extent. Unbiased studies convince me that the Western schools had their own roots to say. They are as interesting, vast and grand in their scope as jyotish and they have many ideas that are independent of jyotish. At some points of time, jyotish and some western astrology schools have influenced EACH OTHER. But as far as the origins are concerned, western DID NOT originate from jyotish, though they both could have had a common mother. But that mother could not have been Vedic.

Quote

Progressions are used in some traditional paramparas (like the one I belong to), but 1 deg per year is not the most famous one.

Unquote

Is there any other traditional parampara that you know of that uses progressions (since you say that progressions are used in *SOME traditional paramparas?)

Please understand my reasons for the discussion. I would like to remain unbiased and investigate claims that are contrary to what is obvious. I have no wish to contradict you or anyone else. But the TRUTH is of utmost importance, since intellectual honesty is very important in giving credit to the deserving school of thought. And any claims contrary to the existing evidence should be supported by facts or arguments in favor of the claim. I understand that Faith is important in spiritual life. But in the study of an art and science (though spiritual at heart) like jyotish, where consistent methodologies and techniques are used, standard methods of questioning in such contexts is very healthy in the LONG RUN. And jyotish is a PRATYAKSHA SASTRA (practical).

I hope you will clarify the same with Sanjay ji atleast now since, in future someone else WILL ask you for a clarification since being a guru you are a REPRESENTATIVE of your parampara (especially given the high probability for the claim to be improbable and of course the topic being very controversial and contrary to known facts)

PVR:

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More than 50% of the astrological knowledge will lose its classical base if we insist on taking literal meanings.

Quote

But claiming a foreign concept as our own is unfair, at least as long as some reasonable evidence is not produced.

Unquote

To me, the very fact is that this knowledge came to me through parampara is a reasonable evidence.

More than 70% of astrology that really works is not found in any books. It has been passed mouth to mouth.

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Unquote

Unfortunately, I cannot give any specific details. When the topic of progressions came up on another Jyotish list a few years back, somebody (don't recall the name) wrote that he knew of a traditional astrologer from a village in north India, who used some "Bhrigu progressions" that were 3 deg per year. I read it and left it at that. I read later also (somewhere else) about some traditional astrologers who use 3 deg per year progressions. Still I did not believe it was really traditional. Later, Sanjay ji taught me progressions based on various divisions and then everything fell in place. So my comment that progressions are used in some paramparas is based on anecdotal evidence (apart from my own parampara that is).

Quote

I hope you will clarify the same with Sanjay ji atleast now since, in future someone else WILL ask you for a clarification since being a guru you are a REPRESENTATIVE of your parampara (especially given the high probability for the claim to be improbable and of course the topic being very controversial and contrary to known facts)

Unquote

I did acknowledge to start with that the topic was controversial and many astrologers don't accept this.

As far as I am concerned, this knowledge came to me from my guru in a parampara. That is enough for me to accept it. If I ask Sanjay ji for strict and explicit classical references of the knowledge given by him, I will have to reject 80% of what he teaches me, including the wonderful technique of "Tithi Pravesha".

Dr. Satya Prakash Chawdhary:

Quote

Satya: As the Brahma Sutra bhasya tells us, "It is unreasonable to give up the plain meaning of words used and put new meaning in their place". And most important is the fact that contextually the attributed meaning or derivation has no place at all. PVNR More than 50% of the astrological knowledge will lose its classical base if we insist on taking literal meanings.

Unquote

The guideline that I stated is applicable to smritis like Manu Samhita and other allied NON-ASTROLOGICAL literature. I very well know that SYMBOLISM is a major method behind astrology which uses the language of metaphor very often. I am not suggesting that astrological language should be read literally and the symbolism be discarded. By all means we should use symbolism where ever required to interpret **ASTROLOGICAL literature. No doubt about that. My point here is about *NON-ASTROLOGICAL TEXTS being used to DERIVE **RETROSPECTIVELY an astrological concept.

The eye sees what the mind knows! So once we know that a technique exists, it is easy to "READ INTO" another text from some other context (be it Manu Samhita or the Veda or Modern Physics or even "Alice in Wonderland")what one wants to read.

My problem with such RETROSPECTIVE ATTRIBUTION is that in the LONG RUN, it distorts history. Quite often this has happened to Indian literature. Eventually there is a danger of being accused of intellectual dishonesty by a western historian or astrologer one day.

But when we say that the Manu Samhita has either endorsed or "GRANTED" it is misleading since it sounds as if Manu Samhita grants or endorses the technique of progression (in this context secondary progression). A lay reader who has not seen the Manu Samhita, could take it as a direct evidence. Manu Samhita is a NON- ASTROLOGICAL TEXT and its purpose NON-ASTROLOGICAL.

And if one wants to derive, one can derive not just the secondary progressions, but tertiary (based on Moon's cycle), jovian (Jupiter's cycles) and many more based on the sphere or loka mentioned.

Quote

Satya: But claiming a foreign concept as our own is unfair, at least as long as some reasonable evidence is not produced.

PVNR: To me, the very fact is that this knowledge came to me through parampara is a reasonable evidence. More than 70% of astrology that really works is not found in any books. It has been passed mouth to mouth.

Unquote

Parampara is a double-edged sword. For argument's sake, let us consider this. Is there anybody else other than Sanjay ji who represents the Achyuta Dasa parampara who could verify the statement? Or is Sanjay ji the only representative? And if that be the case, I will pose another question.

From what I gather from what is on SJC's website, Achyuta dasa is probably at the starting of your parampara. Arguably Achyuta dasa lived in times that are not distant from our own times (16th century). By then Arabic astrology was already in India in its form called Tajika. So again chronologically speaking, the

TECHNIQUE of SECONDARY progressions was popular in the west much before it seemingly appeared in Indian astrology. Here I am not talking of any so called attributed or derived basis from a *NON-ASTROLOGICAL text, but am confining myself to the *ASTROLOGICAL TECHNIQUE. Moreover you were using something called dasamsa progression for which you are yet to show any basis even by way of indirect or attributed evidence. So for all practical purposes, Manu Samhita has no role here. In all fairness to western astrology, till some acceptable evidence is produced, I will leave it there.

BTW speaking of Tajika brings to mind the other question that you left unanswered. In some other posts nearly a year and half back, you had claimed that the so called western aspects also were granted or endorsed or given by Manu (let us not bother about the exact word used by you then). Can any basis be given (however wildly speculative it may be) for it? I am just curious to know where from you would DERIVE the western aspects in anything written by Manu. Please show me even the symbolic basis for the aspects in Manu's works.

Again talking of family traditions, I have no objection to any astrological technique or whatever coming from a family tradition or parampara. But taking REFUGE under a non-astrological text to justify oneself is what I object to, unless you can give some evidence. If you just say that it was taught by your guru, it is fine. Or if you say it was a piece of personal research, fantastic. Both these are acceptable, but definitely not Manu's sanction!

Quote

PVNR Progressions are used in some traditional paramparas (like the one I belong to), but 1 deg per year is not the most famous one.

Satya: Is there any other traditional parampara that you know of that uses progressions (since you say that progressions are used in *SOME traditional paramparas?)

PVNR: Unfortunately, I cannot give any specific details. When the topic of progressions came up on another Jyotish list a few years back, somebody (don't recall the name) wrote that he knew of a traditional astrologer from a village in north India, who used some "Bhrigu progressions" that were 3 deg per year. I read it and left it at that. I read later also (somewhere else) about some traditional astrologers who use 3 deg per year progressions. Still I did not believe it was really traditional. Later, Sanjay ji taught me progressions based on various divisions and then everything fell in place. So my comment that progressions are used in some paramparas is based on anecdotal evidence (apart from my own parampara that is).

Unquote

Sounds like fairly quite a few number of traditional astrologers use the progressions! So it is not that uncommon a technique in jyotish. But none of the classical scholars felt the need to mention it in any work! Either they did not know or probably it was such a common place thing that it did not require any mention. Interestingly all claims remain unverified so far except for *anecdotal evidence. in times to come, one of the readers of your article could give anecdotal

evidence one day that progressions are granted by Manu and that they are part of Jyotish!

Quote

Satya: I hope you will clarify the same with Sanjay ji atleast now since,in future someone else WILL ask you for a clarification since being a guru you are a REPRESENTATIVE of your parampara (especially given the high probability for the claim to be improbable and of course the topic being very controversial and contrary to known facts)

PVNR: I did acknowledge to start with that the topic was controversial and many astrologers don't accept this. As far as I am concerned, this knowledge came to me from my guru in a parampara. That is enough for me to accept it. If I ask Sanjay ji for strict and explicit classical references of the knowledge given by him, I will have to reject 80% of what he teaches me, including the wonderful technique of "Tithi Pravesha".

Unquote

It is not just controversial. It is not that *many astrologers don't accept this. It is that the reference was not appropriate and misleading. But instead of dwelling on that, I will move on to other things.

Speaking of the "Tithi Pravesha", I have two observations to make. Two years back it struck me as to why one cannot extend the concept of the Hindu New Year based on a luni-solar calendar (like in Andhra), to solar return. And what I got by doing, I termed it as "Tithi Return". My Tithi Return is very much the same as SJC's "Tithi Pravesha". Whether it is an insight as in my case, or it is a parampara based teaching as in your case, there IS A DEFINITE ASTROLOGICAL BASIS for it. It can be justified by known ASTROLOGICAL TECHNIQUES AND ASTRO-LOGIC. Though indirect, one could say that there is some basis for this logic in traditional *astrological literature, atleast by way of inference. Of course there is a logic for progressions too. But that does not warrant the inappropriate reference to Manu as having granted it a basis, as it is misleading to me. That is like trying to make it sound as ancient and authoritative as Manu, which it is not. Well as you know I am not against research. Jataka is a pratyaksa sastra, not ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE that cannot be changed at any cost. As long as the VEDIC PARADIGM and SPIRIT remain unaltered, probably one can be liberal with what is allowed and what is not.

Before we proceed further, let me clarify that I am not against tradition. I am very liberal in spiritual matters. But I would like to verify that what is represented as traditional is really traditional, or presented in APPROPRIATE words atleast, and not be misleading, at least in branches of knowledge like Jyotish.

And that brings me to another issue. Sometime back, there was a discussion about Jyotish being Para Vidya and certain standards being discussed in the name of it being para vidya. I did not object to the usage of that word then because the atmosphere was heated up already with Dinanatha's case. So in good spirit I did not want to divert and add to the explosiveness. In better times, now I will raise that point. But before that I would like to submit a few standard practices wrt VEDIC LITERATURE.

THE VEDA IS CONSIDERED (if you are a believer) SUPREME AND UNALTERABLE. The vedangas, puranas, itihosas, upavedas are considered equally sacred, BUT in all matters where there is any contradiction, the VEDA overrules the secondary literature. Any one who is familiar with the vedic system knows this, whatever tradition or parampara he/she belongs to. Whichever System of Indian philosophy one subscribes to (as long as they are among the astikas), all accept the Divine origins (that Veda is Apauruseya) and accept the Veda as Supreme authority, as the Veda is considered to be REVEALED KNOWLEDGE. Whether it is Kanada (Vaisesika) or Gotama (Nyaya) or Kapila (Samkhya) or Jaimini (Purva Mimamsa) or the various schools of Vedanta, all accept the authority of the Vedas.

Now the statement that Jyotish is Para Vidya that SJC representatives (gurus) often make is mis-information. Let us see what the Veda itself says about this.

Do you know where in the Vedas, the classification of knowledge into Para and Apara Vidya is given? Have you studied this before saying such an important thing to many sisyas who believe what they are taught, because they believe it comes through the traditional parampara? I am afraid not.

It is in the Mundaka Upanisad that the entire expanse of knowledge has been classified under two heads- apara and para. I will reproduce the verses.

"Saunaka, duly approached Angiras and asked: Through what (whom) being known, O venerable sir, does all this become known?

To him he said: The knowers of Brahman say with certainty that two kinds of knowledge are to be known- -the para (higher) as well as the apara (lower).

Of these the apara is the Rg veda, the Yajur veda, the Sama veda, the Atharva veda, siksa (orthography or pronunciation), kalpa (ritual), vyakarana (grammar), chandas (prosody or metrics) and jyotisa (astronomy/naksatra vidya). Now the Para or the highest is that whereby that imperishable (aksara) Brahman is known. That which is the subject of knowledge, beyond the reach of grasping, without gotra, without color and form, without eyes and ears (senses of perception), without hands and feet (senses of action), Eternal, Omnipresent, All pervading, exceptionally subtle, Immutable, the Primal Cause of all beings, the wise see Him everywhere".

Mundaka Upanisad (1, i, 3-6)

Thus we have the authority of the very Veda that only the knowledge of the Imperishable Brahman/God is Para. The rest all including the other contents of veda that deal with mundane prayers, rituals, etc as well as the vedangas, are all considered apara or lower to say. Only the part of the Veda that directly is concerned with Knowledge of the Absolute, or God or the One, is considered Para. Nothing else.

From the above, it becomes clear that Jyotish, even the Vedanga part of it (which definitely is not predictive anyway) is NOT PARA, but apara vidya.

The 6 systems of philosophy (shad darsanas) too are based on the INSPIRED REVELATIONS of the Veda, which they regarded as their Source. All the vedangas, upangas and upavedas are meant to explore the mysteries of the vedas and to elucidate, expound and elaborate the knowledge imparted through the Vedas.

That is why the Vedas are referred to as SRUTI. The sruti is different from the sastra. The sastra is the systematized knowledge, based on the sruti, and has EVOLVED out of it. Each sastra deals with one facet of knowledge in a specialized way. The sruti, sastra and smrti (Manu Samhita is a smrti that primarily concerns itself with ethical, legal and moral codes), are all concerned with man and his relation to the Creation.

It is known that with changing times, new codes (legal, ethical and moral) are written. A case in point is Parasara smrti. But such modifications or teachings have to be based on the revealed knowledge, the Veda. Where a contradiction occurs, the sastra is discarded in favour of the sruti (Veda).

Kindly do not misunderstand my intentions, that I am trying to argue or contradict you. Whether it is the depiction of Jyotisa as Para vidya, or attribution of progressions to Manu smrti (which it definitely does not deal with as its purpose is entirely different), it goes against the tradition, that which a parampara should uphold. All else is secondary, subservient to the Veda.

But there is nothing that prevents an astrologer from adding progressions to his methodology in JATAKA (which is different from Vedanga jyotisa in its purpose), since jyotish is a sastra and you are free to add techniques AS LONG AS THEY DON'T CONTRADICT the Veda.

In conclusion, I affirm once again that I am not against the use of progressions (I myself use them), but wonder whether it is appropriate to READ THINGS into other texts whose intended purpose is an entirely different matter. It is not a question of literal or symbolic use of an ASTROLOGICAL text, but about the appropriateness of the CLAIM.

It is the responsibility of a guru to ascertain the facts and clarify fully with both his guru as well as the general vedic thought before venturing to affirm or suggest something, especially when he is representing a parampara. One day or the other some student will ask you the same question. Or another astrologer may ask for a clarification. Or still worse someone may use this in bad spirit. As I said, parampara is a double edged sword. Well I raised this question in good spirit. Please don't take offence. There is some thing that we all gain in every discussion. Let us ponder over the same.

And finally I guess our outlooks are probably different. To me both the relative truth as well as absolute truth are important, though the main basis and emphasis is on the Absolute.

PVR:

Quote

In conclusion, I affirm once again that I am not against the use of progressions (I myself use them), but wonder whether it is appropriate to READ THINGS into other texts whose intended purpose is an entirely different matter. It is not a question of literal or symbolic use of an ASTROLOGICAL text, but about the appropriateness of the CLAIM.

Unquote

Thank you for your thoughts. I do not agree with your differentiation of texts, and the appropriateness of "reading things" into them, based the "intended purpose". Intended purpose can be subjective and even misleading. Reading things is

reading things. Period. You can't differentiate between reading things into Parasara's teachings or Manu's teachings.

Anyway, thank you for your advice. I will talk more on this topic later, when the time is right.

Nadi Astrologers and Nadi leaves

[Editor: This message was posted by Satya Prakash in vedic-astrology yahoo group in Jun, 2003]

There are many Nadi texts in the South. In the North they generally go under the name of Samhitas (like the Bhrigu Samhita). Amongst the South Indian Nadis, there are many texts and methodologies. Instead of referring to individual readings for specific people, if we were to differentiate these Nadis based on their methodologies (as Jyotishis we are more concerned with methodologies, especially if they are replicable enough).

Without going into a time consuming explanation of the various methodologies, I will briefly give this much information. Texts like the Dhruva nadi and Chandra Kala Nadi (Deva Keralam) not only use the lagna, but use highly sensitive divisions called Nadiamsas. Both the texts are wonderful sources for further research, while personally I am more attracted to the Dhruva Nadi as I had tried to understand sage Satyacharya's teachings seriously at one time.

But there are other Nadi methodologies that are very effective and hence cannot be brushed aside as being too simplistic. The school of thought that Mr.R.G.Rao of Bangalore has evolved is based on his own studies into a few such texts. I had met him in 1994 or 95. His work is not based on reading your nadi leaf (generally nadi readers do not knowe much of astrology, they just read what is written, if they are not fraudulent). Sri RG Rao, is not a nadi reader as generally understood. He is a researcher into certain Nadi methodologies. He does a curious and interesting mix of certain nadi astrology principles, palmistry etc. It might be interesting to know that he uses sign aspects (not the same as the generally known Jaimini rashis drishties). A lot in the nadis that he refers to seems to be very similar to certain Arabic and ancient Hellenistic ideas, including the sign aspects. I must submit that he did quite a good reading for me based on my palm prints and the chart.

I have often felt that certain Nadi methodologies of South India (especially the ones used by the likes of Sri R.G.Rao) are quite similar to the ancient roots of western astrology (at least partly) and hold some important clues to one single body of astrology in the distant past.

When one studies (even superficially) the various nadi methods of the South, one will realize how vast and oceanic ancient astrology is. It is awe-inspiring to say the least. Every technique has some merit, whether it is based on lagna, nadiamsa, karakatwas, transits, promittors, or directions.

Who is Plagiarizing from whom?

[Editor: The following is an edited version of a conversation happened in vedic-astrology yahoo group during Sep 2003]

Mukund (monmuk111):

I noticed something interesting while browsing some Vedic astrology websites and would like your input on this. I saw a prediction on a website that is identical to the one that Sanjay did for me. So I'm trying to figure out who is plagiarizing from whom?

Let's define the meaning of "plagiarizing" first. Plagiarizing means stealing the literary work of someone else and calling it your own.

Here is a prediction related to Rahu located in the 6th house taken from a website www.vedic-astrology.i12.com (of David Frawley):

"Rahu produces great sustaining power when placed in the Sixth house. Every physical impediment is mysteriously removed, success in temporal endeavours is assured, and diplomatic skill is developed to a considerable extent. You may not have much idealism in life and may even keep undesirable company. Your strength, wisdom, valour and conscience are stable. This Rahu denotes destruction of the adversary. Gain of wealth, knowledge, vigour. No gain through uncles. Wealth through foreign leader type; You may be a hero, handsome, intelligent, respected, well-known. If well-aspected, all the evils fade away. A strong Rahu indicates vehicular wealth. Progeny to uncle denied; or daughters only. Rahu in Sixth House promotes health and strength, trusted employees, favours service, fortune through paternal relatives; some income or employment. Benefit through prosperous uncles aunts. Strong and brave. Radical, affluent, with conveyance. Jewellery, wealth and fortune. Robust health. This Rahu indicates an unstable mind of the father and maternal uncle. You are patient, tolerant, prosperous. Rahu is in 6."

Now, here is a prediction related to Rahu located in 6th house that Sanjay did for me:

"Rahu in the sixth house in Aries: Rahu produces great sustaining power when placed in the sixth house. Every physical impediment is mysteriously removed, success in temporal endeavors is assured, and diplomatic skill is developed to a considerable extent. You may not have much idealism in life and may even keep undesirable company. You will feel the allure of unethical, disrespectful or forbidden activities. Your strength, wisdom, valor and conscience are stable. This Rahu denotes destruction of the adversary. Gain of wealth, knowledge, vigor, and no gains through uncles. Wealth through a foreign leader or foreigners, increases longevity, prosperity and indicates that you are of noble birth, but may become a debauch. You may be a hero, handsome, intelligent, respected, and well known. Since it is well aspected by the Moon, all the evils fade away. A strong Rahu indicates wealth of vehicles. Either uncle or the native maybe denied progeny or may have daughters alone. Rahu promotes health and strength, trusted employees, favors service, fortune through paternal relatives; some income or employment. Benefit through prosperous uncles aunts. Danger from service in army or navy and professions of Mars should be avoided. Rahu makes you strong and brave, radical, affluent, with conveyance, jewelry, wealth and fortune. This Rahu indicates an unstable mind of the father or maternal uncle. You may be infirm, imbecile but there will be an absence of enemies, making you friendly and full of riches. You are patient, tolerant and prosperous. Although you sometimes pass through periods of anxious uncertainty, you finally attain your goal. You are not much respected by society, yet have all the conveniences anyone can hope for."

Both these write-ups are VERBATUM and both are IDENTICAL. Now, I have immense confidence in Sanjay as I have interacted with him a lot over the past 2 years so it appears that this Website may be plagiarizing Sanjay's work, if so, this

website should be censured in some way. OR, both Sanjay and the Website are plagiarising from somewhere else.

Plagiarising in India is a way of life; however, plagiarising in the US is illegal--I remember two students were expelled from my university for plagiarising while I was studying. Moreover, plagiarising is outright unethical.

I'm hoping Sanjay comes up with an explanation for this OR other members close to Sanjay has some explanation for the obvious plagiarism listed above. Thanks

Manu Batura (manubatura):

I cannot and do not want to comment about Sanjay or the website. But I was just wondering the number of books that have plagiarized from ancient books of India. Does plagiarising mean using the same order of words, or does it mean using the same information? Isn't converting Sanskrit to English plagiarism? People buy english books not because they are fascinated by the English in the books. It is because of the rules of prediction. Information and words are two different things. The latter are just a means to convey the former. Which do you think is more important?

Satya Prakash (satyaprakasika):

Though this doesn't concern me, I think I can identify the source of that reading. If my memory is right I have seen this reading from the website that you mention, in Das Goravani's software. Moreover the website that you mention has used Goravani's software for all calculations. Probably both Sanjay ji and Mr. Harini (is that his name?) are licensed users of the software. Though it doesn't amount to plagiarism really, I guess the author of that article should have acknowledged that he is using Das Goravani's software for some of the readings. Most of those articles there (nearly 75%) draw heavily from Goravani's readings. I guess that as a licensed user he may be entitled to use the readings. Probably Sanjay is also a licensed user. One of my students owns a copy of Goravani's software. I have seen him taking the readings from the software and modifying them wherever he felt the need to, and just giving them to his clients.

As for Manu Batura's comments about translations of Sanskrit texts, translation does not amount to plagiarism. Translation is a fully original work and is as demanding as writing a new one. In fact each translation has its own copyright. Again why do we prefer one translation and not the other? It is not just the information, but also the expression and accuracy that we look for in a translation. While the spirit of the original is most important, quite often the choice of words is equally important. Take a work like the I Ching- the Chinese classic. I have at least 50 translations and commentaries with me. None of the first few translations in English are as good as some of the current ones. And even if there are ten good translations/commentaries, each of them offers its own unique insights and perspective. Another instance is that of Kautilya's Arthashastra. I have six translations with me. Again the first translation is just fine. The later authors have done a better job. Now this brings me to another topic that I have often thought of responding to here – the various discussions and debates on the Vedas and the Tantras.

I have read many discussions here on the Vedas and/or Tantras where people quote a verse or two and start a hot discussion. Most such quotes are from the

translations of Griffith, Muller, Wilson etc. Something like the Veda has, quite often, a symbolic meaning which we miss if we do not know of its existence. For understanding's sake all commentaries on the Vedas should be broadly classified into

1. Pre-Sayana commentaries
2. Works of Sayana and those who follow his school of thought
3. Western scholars's commentaries
4. Dayananda's commentaries
5. Aurobindo and those who either follow or are inspired by his ideas (like Kapali Sastriar who in turn has influenced R.L.Kashyap)
6. Commentators who have attempted to compare some of the above

Many do not even know that most Western and Indian scholars rely heavily on Sayana. Sayana himself belonged to the 14th century AD, and is thus more of our contemporary than of the ancient seers. Sayana himself belongs to our own times, when the true meaning of ancient wisdom is largely lost. Sayana adopted mostly a literal and ritualistic approach. Behind the persistent ritualistic note, all else is lost! It has always been held that Revealed Wisdom has deep spiritual, philosophic and psychological meanings. Sayana. His commentaries mould the language of the Veda into a principally ritualistic mould. At some places he mentions older interpretations, but does not admit them. Take for instance the word Vrtra. Sayana himself admits of an older interpretation of Vrtra as the 'Aacchaadaka' (one who covers or hides) who holds back from man the objects of his desire and aspirations. This ancient psychological interpretation is more in the lines of Aurobindo's school of thought. But Sayana simply treats Vrtra as the physical demon (contextually the physical CLOUD) who holds back the water and has to be pierced by the Giver of Rain (Indra). Sayana too (like most modern scholars) was pre-occupied with giving a SCIENTIFIC and RITUALISTIC interpretation. The Vedas deal with science etc, but that is not the main objective. And where there are obvious parallels between modern science and the Ancient seers, one may freely draw a parallel. But any attempt to ARTIFICIALLY read one into the other can be misleading if not dangerous. The wisdom of the Vedas is timeless, while science has shifting paradigms.

While the Vedas HAVE a Ritualistic basis TOO, the roots are even deeper, running into psychological, philosophical and Spiritual depths. And Sayana does injustice in this regard. Yet Sayana's commentaries have their own role and value. He was the only one to even attempt a commentary on the whole body of the Veda. The very task is unparalleled and has not been equaled by scholars either before or after him. Neither has Aurobindo nor Dayananda or any other commentator commented on even One Veda fully. Neither do we have any other ancient commentator who seems to have achieved this feat. So all commentators behind Sayana are forced to study him, at least because he is the only one available, rather the default commentator. But one has to keep Sayana's limitations in mind.

As for the western scholars, a majority of them have largely followed or at least drew from Sayana, apart from suffering from certain pre-conceived notions.

These translations were among the earliest and suffer from many faults. And since most of the older translations are in the public domain now (copyright ceases after some time period, say 60 years), you find websites that give you these texts freely. But in the past 60 years or 100 years new research and investigation must have led the scholars to change some of their opinions. Better translations too have come, though only of selected portions. But people still hang on to the incorrect translations. Not many have the ability to even judge for themselves if a translation has caught the spirit of the original. Moreover interpretation or revelation of the symbolic significance (where applicable) often needs a spiritual adept if not a realized soul.

And what to speak of the Tantras? Unless one is initiated and studies the Agamas, most textual interpretations do not make sense. All this biased and talk of left handed Tantra arises from a lack of internal knowledge and only betrays our ignorance . The classification of the Tantric path into the threefold or sevenfold path has little or nothing to do with black magic or harmful practices. It has more to do with specific sadhanas and attitudes. While I have lot to share, I do not have the time now. So I will end the post here.

Mukund (monmuk111):

First and foremost, thanks for a comprehensive reply and having the guts to reply as plagiarism is a very sensitive issue and especially sensitive as it involves the resident Guru of this discussion group, Sanjay Rath.

Dr. Satya, I was aware that Das Goravani had a Jyotish software that he sold commercially, but didn't know that this software is programmed to produce an actual reading of planets in houses/rashis.

The extract the I took from this website is from Das Goravani's own horoscope reading listed on this website. Now, I understand why that website included Das' horoscope amongst other celebrities as Das is not a celebrity or an internationally known public figure.

Ya, I agree with you that translation from the classical text is MOST DEFINITELY NOT plagiarism. However, copying someone else's literary work, word for word, is INDEED plagiarism.

At first I thought the website was stealing Sanjay's work. Now, we know the whole truth.

Manu Batura (manubatura):

Thank you for your comments. It was filled with knowledge.

Failed predictions

[Editor: The following is a message posted by Satya Prakash in vedic-astrology yahoo group during May. 2004]

A failed prediction is a failed prediction! It just reflects the incompleteness and limitations of the astrologer, apart from other factors such as personal *BIAS* or wishful thinking. Such experiences only ground us better and can potentially inspire a committed student (every astrologer is a student for a lifetime) to work and research better. Post mortem is dual edged. As long as one doesn't use it to justify oneself or resort to faulty logic (the ego can be very subtle), honest retrospective study on failed predictions is the best teacher. Every serious astrologer knows this. The only thing is let us refrain from using it to EXPLAIN AWAY anything. Finally it may be a good idea not to post

retrospective analysis for the next few days. Instead one should take some time and go inwards. It is best to let at least 3 days pass as one is capable of better judgment only after the heat of the moment subsides. An important thing that all astrologers have to keep in mind is that the % of failures in political predictions has to be higher than other areas due to various reasons. Finally who is playing God? After all we are perfect souls with imperfect bodies and MINDS.

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Predictive & Psychological Astrology

An integrated psycho-spiritual approach to Jyotish

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

The word Jyotisha can mean both Astronomy as well as Astrology. As for the Vedas, they do not speak directly about either, be it astrology or astronomy. The Samhitas refer to the luminaries, constellations etc. This knowledge may be employed for various purposes. The purpose depends on the user too and not just the knowledge revealed. It should be pointed out that there are at least four approaches to interpreting the *Vedic* corpus.

1. The *Adhi Yajna* approach which is primarily *ritual* based
2. The *Adhi Daivata* approach which is primarily *archetypal*
3. The *Adhyatma* approach which is primarily *psycho-spiritual*
4. The *Tritaya* approach or the *integrated* approach

While the Vedas have a ritualistic basis too, the roots are even deeper, running into psychological, philosophical and spiritual depths. Hence the need for various approaches to interpret the Veda. The seemingly different approaches are not contradictory or disparate. They are co-existent in a way. Thus the Vedic hymns can be interpreted in more than one way and at more than one level- ritualistic, psychological and spiritual. As the Skanda Smrti suggests the Vedic corpus has three meanings ('trayorthas sarva-vedeshu'). These three meanings can be accommodated in an integrated and interrelated approach which the 'Tritaya' school of thought purports to do. Even within Jyotish there is an integrated approach to astrology incorporating both the psychological and predictive perspectives simultaneously. The famous South Indian text '*Prasna Marga*' delineates the significations of various houses (bhavas) under two categories- external (bahya) and internal (antara). Even Varahamihira adopts a similar approach in his '*Brihat Jataka*'. The 'internal' refers to the abstract psycho-spiritual phenomena/principles while the 'external' refers to the more concrete manifestation as events, persons and places. The external events are an extension or reflection of the internal psycho-spiritual principles. This integrated approach to houses and planets paves way to a simultaneous approach to both the psychological/ internal and predictive/ external levels of astrological understanding or practice. Moreover such an integrated approach is more in keeping with the current overall paradigm shift.

While the spiritual foundations of Jyotisha are unchanging and timeless in some sense, the approach to astrology could be influenced by the times and the paradigm shift. A strong influence of Humanistic and/or Transpersonal psychology is increasingly evident on a large number of intellectuals during the modern times. Carl Jung's works have begun to influence some in the Jyotisha camp too, while most western astrologers are already looking at astrology through the eyes of modern psychology. Yet one should not mistake the superficial approach to psychology that *some* western astrologers adopt in the name of "psychological readings". Likewise one shouldn't mistake the fatalistic approach to life

that *some* eastern astrologers adopt in the name of *karma* . Most vedic astrologers feel that psychological astrology is for lesser brains who dare not predict, whilst most tropical astrologers are wary of and look down upon "fortune telling", as they refer to predicting. As an astrologer who studied and practiced both the approaches, I feel that both are wrong. ***How can one predict without understanding the psychological roots? On the other hand how would one be sure that all these psychological readings are right unless one is able to predict fairly well based on one's understanding of such psychological roots.*** After all, any science does try to predict, though in a different sense. One has to pay tribute to Indian astrology for keeping alive the tradition of predictive astrology in tact. Nowhere else in the world is astrology a continuous living tradition as it has been in India .

Personally I feel that the primary purpose of astrology is not fortune telling, but an exploration of consciousness, a journey into the psyche, into the unconscious forces which stem from the past *vasanas* , into the 'shadow' (a term used by Carl Jung which comes close to the tantric *papa purusha*), into the universe that we have within us, into the conflict between the opposing forces and the process of attaining equilibrium. Of course these forces manifest as our (as well as others') reactions to situations, situations that we attract to ourselves because of these unconscious drives (*vasanas* and *samskaras*), which thus indirectly influence our life path. Fortune telling based on such symbols of the psyche like the horoscope, dreams, omens etc is the most ordinary usage of this knowledge, albeit an application prone to error due to various factors. Nevertheless astrology can help us understand our karma, especially the hidden or unseen factors that shape our life as our own karmic forces, and thereby encourage us to take responsibility for our actions. But the highest benefit of a study of this kind of a subject is Self-actualization or individuation- a process that assists the individual in an expression of one 'self', taking one to the final stages of Nirvana. Astrology can help an individual in integrating the many facets of the psyche to become "*ONE*'-'*SELF*"'. When this happens the individual feels a sense of psychic "wholeness", which is a natural state of equilibrium. Don't the ancient texts promise that anyone who studies and teaches astrology is assured of final liberation (*moksha*)? Perhaps that is the ultimate goal of a spiritual system like astrology.

Jyotisha through the ages

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Jyotisha, which is often referred to in the west as Vedic astrology, is an integral part of Indian life. It provides us with light on life. The ancient seers used it primarily for timing the rituals around which the Vedic culture was based. Broadly speaking ancient Indian arts and sciences has gone through four phases- **Vedic, Puranic, Tantric and Modern** .

There are two versions in vogue. According to the first the three traditions - the Vedic, Puranic and Tantric/Agamic are equally old and co-existent. It is just that they reveal the Truth in various ways. The other version prevalent is that the Vedic tradition is the oldest followed by the Puranic. Whatever may be the case, one thing is certain. Historically

ancient wisdom seems to have been through various phases with each phase adopting/emphasizing one of the three traditions predominantly. In other words the Veda, the Purana and Tantra rose to popularity during various periods historically.

Veda

The Vedas are the most ancient spiritual literature of India . 'Veda' literally means knowledge, knowledge of truth based upon direct perception. This knowledge is not theoretical. It is based on an actual experience of Cosmic Consciousness. Such knowledge flows naturally through the seer in the state of pure consciousness. It was revealed knowledge springing from the One source, the source of all that is. The Vedas as they are handed down to us are the revelations of many seers who had achieved such high states of pure consciousness. Nobody can be said to be the author, since the knowledge is universal and eternal. The ancient seers and their disciples preserved this knowledge and handed it down to the next generations, with each generation learning it orally. It was many thousand years later that the Vedas were actually written. It is still a living tradition in India , albeit with some differences. The Rg vedic sages had identified the luminaries, the planets, the nodes and the 27 asterisms or nakshatras. They were primarily concerned with reckoning time in order to perform the sacrifices according to certain cycles. The nodes too have received the attention of the sages. In line with the principles underlying the Rg veda, a vedic astrologer should actually use the nakshatras and the nodes more than what is being done now by the vast majority.

Purana

Many thousand years later the Puranas taught the spiritual principles of the Vedas in the form of mythology. Concepts and ideas were symbolized as characters and depicted in the Puranas. The Puranas are probably semi-historical and mythological in nature. Whatever their actual nature, when demystified, the Puranas also speak of the same Vedic truths. But one should be cautious and not take the Puranas as an infallible authority. In fact some great thinkers of India have rejected the Puranas as not being fully authentic. Intolerance shown in some puranas to the Jains, or Buddhists, or even rival sects within Hinduism is quite often due to later additions, interpolations and expansions by certain over zealous followers.

Let me explain more about the puranas. As the Linga Purana says, it could be possible that sage Parasara taught the original Purana Samhita to his son Vyasa who in turn taught it to Romaharshana. Thus though all the puranas are attributed to Vyasadeva himself, the texts of the eighteen puranas were written by various disciples. This has resulted in some differences between the texts. Moreover, most of these texts that we see today in their present and final form were rewritten with many interpolations between 300AD and 1000AD. But earlier versions of the puranas were in existence even during 500BC. This also explains the differences and contradictions between the puranas. Hence to take everything in the puranas as final or authentic in a historical or factual sense may be erroneous. At the same time, this should not deter us from benefiting from the living wisdom. Moreover there are many gems, facts and spiritual truths in these myths in spite

of the interpolations. Most of the interpolations are obvious to a discerning reader in their subject and style. Some accounts are amplified beyond their primary scope. At times efforts to glorify or elevate particular schools of thought or deities are made in these interpolations. But it is possible to still feel the common spirit and the original sense of the myth.

Agama

Later came the period of Agamas, when Tantra '**rose to popularity**' (what I mean is that Tantra existed even before this time, but ROSE to popularity during this period of the Agamas. In fact Tantra is as old as the Veda and could possibly be related to the 'Vratya' culture whose remnants could have survived in the tantric tradition. There are many internal references to the Vratyas in the Vedas themselves. Unfortunately Tantra has been misrepresented and abused so much that today Tantra is associated with black magic and inferior practices and the very word carries a negative connotation to the lay person). The period of the Agamas was the period of techniques. A majority of the people had come far away from the natural state of the mind. With this came the need for techniques and formulae. Most of the works written in this period reflect this attitude. Nevertheless the Vedic principles still remained the basis. Remedial measures like yantras, gems etc reveal influences of the Tantric period. Let me add a note here.

The essence of Tantra is Vedic while the myths and deities are Puranic in origin. Present day Hinduism, it should be noted, is a mixture of all these approaches. In fact, a lot in Hinduism is closer to practical tantra than we imagine. The principal Vedic deities like Prajapati, Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma etc., are not really an integral part of popular Hinduism today. There are almost no temples to these Vedic deities in India today, while all the key deities popular in present day India- like Shiva (the auspicious), Vishnu (the sustainer), Saraswati (patron Goddess of learning), Durga, Kali, Lalita (all aspects of Sakti) who are more Tantric and Puranic in origin- have hundred thousands of temples throughout India. Most of the scriptures today are at root Tantric- if not in source -at least in aspiration. It is hard to differentiate between the vedantic and tantric traditions in present day Hinduism, as they are intricately woven into each other. To say that Tantra came later and influenced the Vedic (vedantic) tradition, is far from the truth. Both the traditions seem to have existed since ancient times, influencing each other. Today even an orthodox Advaitic parampara like the Sringeri math, prescribes agamic (tantric) practices for its followers. Thus both the Tantric and Vedic (vedantic) traditions are co-existent and often intricately linked.

It now becomes clear that to understand any ancient Indian art or science all these three aspects are to be examined. So too with Jyotisha. The spiritual principles of astrology have their basis in the Vedas. The Puranas depict the same truth as interesting stories making use of the powers of imagination of the mind. To miss these illuminating stories is to miss part of the teachings. Many well known classical works of Hindu astrology have been compiled/written during the Agamic/Tantric period and thus necessitate a basic knowledge of the Agama sastra if one wishes to fully appreciate the context or meaning (for instance the most elaborate description of the astrological use of

'Sarvatobhadra chakra' is found not in an exclusively astrological text, but an agamic text called 'Brahma Yamala'). Hence all the above tools have to be employed in any attempt to learn Jyotisha if one hopes to glimpse even a fraction of the truth. In other words, the spiritual principles, the demystified stories and the classical works of astrology should all be utilized in the learning process.

The scientific aspect of Jyotisha

Apart from the above three aspects of learning Jyotisha, another important point has to be kept in mind. Astrology is both an art and science. As a science, its principles work in patterns that are replicable. Otherwise it would cease to be a science. Unless its principles can be demonstrated to be replicable (at least under certain conditions) the student cannot place his/her faith in astrology as a science. For this reason it has to be studied with a scientific attitude so that one can discern dogma from scientific principles. This is the growing trend during the modern times. This aspect too has to be studied, though one should not forget that Jyotisha is not a mundane science, but a divine science par excellence. The modern student of Jyotisha has to keep in mind all the above factors. Hence to appreciate Jyotisha fully one has to study all the following aspects.

The spiritual principles (Vedic and Tantric)

- The myths (Puranic)
- The classical techniques and combinations given in the texts (medieval)
- Replicability of the patterns (scientific or modern).

Now let us look at the history of Jyotisha briefly. It is hard to find the exact time of the origin of Jyotisha. Scholars do not agree with each other and are constantly changing their views. Yet one thing is certain. The roots of Jyotisha are as old as Vedic knowledge. As for the Vedas the traditional view is that they are 'Apauruseya'. The risis are said to be the ones through whom the knowledge was revealed. They are not its authors. Vedic wisdom is considered eternal. But for historical purposes one may have to use some dating process. The attempt here should be seen only in this light. Without taking the dates for the Vedic or Puranic period as definite, let us try to look at the issue objectively.

Vedic period : (>8000 BC?)

Many scholars say that astrology wasn't yet predictive and that the vedic emphasis was only on astronomy and muhurta (electoral astrology). While a superficial study could lead to the above view, deeper study leaves no doubt that the Vedic hymns have a predictive basis at least in a seed form. Here a major distinction has to be made between the Veda, Vedanga Jyotisha and Jyothisha.

Veda, Vedanga Jyotisha and Jyotisha

The word Jyotisha can mean both Astronomy as well as Astrology. As for the Vedas, they do not speak directly about either, be it astrology or astronomy. The Samhitas refer

to the luminaries, constellations etc. This knowledge may be employed for various purposes. The purpose depends on the user too and not just the knowledge revealed. It is Vedanga Jyotisha (which is ascribed to the late Vedic period) that is astronomical, not the Veda or Jyotisha. It should be pointed out that there are at least four approaches to interpreting the Veda.

1. **The Adhi Yajna approach**
2. **The Adhi Daivata approach**
3. **The Adhyatma approach**
4. **The Tritaya approach**

While the Vedas have a ritualistic basis too, the roots are even deeper, running into psychological, philosophical and spiritual depths. Hence the need for various approaches to interpret the Veda. Sayana has relied on the Adhi Yajna approach largely. In this approach the knowledge of the luminaries, Nakshatras etc is employed in fixing the time for the vedic rituals. The rules of Vedanga jyotisha seem to have been evolved for finding the Tithis and Nakshatras for the purposes of the Vedic rituals or yajnas.

Vedanga Jyotisha and the Siddhantas

Lagadha is said to have * **compiled*** the 36 slokas of Rgveda jyotisha. Vedanga Jyotisha is a collection of Rg, Yajur and Atharvaveda Jyotisha. As already stated the calculations of Vedanga Jyotisha seem to have been used for timing the Vedic rituals (yajnas). Since the calculations of Vedanga Jyotisha needed regular corrections which is a very tedious process, the Hindus took to the Siddhantas at a later date. The Siddhantas have more straightforward and accurate (in a way) methods of calculating. But where did the Siddhantas come from? According to tradition they were already existing (probably through the other traditions like the Puranic tradition) when they were adopted by the later day brahmins. They represented the teachings of various sages (a few of which seemed to be from foreign lands too though the majority of them are the teachings of the Hindu seers). So the Siddhantas did not spring forth suddenly, but *rose to popularity* due to the Brahmins favouring them due to reasons already stated.

It is interesting to note that scholars found many verses in 'Vedanga Jyotisha' quite obscure till the late Sri Shama Sastry came up with an interesting exposition based on 'light from an unexpected quarter'. He studied Jaina astrological works like 'Suryapragnapti' and 'Jyotishkaranda'. Curiously these works have preserved calculations along the lines of 'Vedanga Jyotisha' (probably for the observance of religious customs performed on Full Moon and New Moon days) though the Hindus themselves took to the Siddhantas.

I should remind the reader that I made a distinction between the 'Veda', 'Vedanga Jyotisha' and 'Jyotisha' earlier in this article. It is only 'Vedanga Jyotisha' (the reference here is to an actual text by that name) that is astronomical while Jyotisha can mean both astronomy as well as astrology. Of course the Veda itself does not speak *directly* of either. As already pointed out, there are at least four approaches to interpreting the Veda.

The seemingly different approaches are not contradictory or disparate. They are co-existent in a way. Thus the Vedic hymns can be interpreted in more than one way and at more than one level- ritualistic, psychological and spiritual. As the Skanda Smrti suggests the Vedic corpus has three meanings (*'trayorthas sarva-vedeshu'*). These three meanings can be accommodated in an integrated and interrelated approach which the 'Tritaya' school of thought purports to do.

The Tritaya approach to the Veda

The 'tritaya' is a reconciliation of the adhiyajna, the adhi-daivata and adhyatma approaches as observed by the famous scholar Sri S. K. Ramachandra Rao in his 'Rgveda Darsana'. The adhyatma is implicit in the adhi-daivata which in turn is implicit in the adhiyajna.

The integrated 'tritaya' approach to the Veda is in accord with the eligibility and capability of the student or seeker of knowledge, each of the meanings being meant for one of the possible levels of the student. So at one level the Vedic hymns may refer to the individual devatas like Agni, Soma or Indra. At another level they refer to the one principal devata who is the origin and inner ruler of all devatas. At yet another level they may refer to the seeker's own psycho-physical constitution ruled by the Self. In accordance with the integrated approach some of the Vedic hymns can be interpreted to derive the fundamental basis of Jyotisha, specifically predictive astrology. For instance the various hymns involving the grahas refer to the significations (karakatwas) of the grahas which form the basis of every good prediction. Any astrologer with a good knowledge of the basics of predictive astrology as well as some knowledge of these vedic hymns, will be able to identify these karakatwas from the vedic hymns with little effort. It is only a misconception that the Vedas have no astrological basis at all. But that should be dealt with more elaborately in a separate article.

Atharvana Jyotisha

There is an important text called '*Atharva Jyotisha*' containing 14 chapters and 162 slokas in all. As this text deals with the weekday too, it may be of recent origin relatively. Though it does not belong to the vedic period as such, its affiliation (at least by name) qualifies it to be discussed here. Moreover it deals with some of the basic foundations of Muhurta as well as predictive astrology though it is largely a *Samhita* text. I will describe some of its contents briefly. The division of time, Nakshatras- roudra, soumya and karma yoga taras, moon's strength as a basis for planetary results, tarabala, graha, ulka, vidyut, bhukampa (earthquakes) etc are all dealt with in this text. A famous verse from this text is from the seventh chapter (verse 21). "In the matter of their potency for bestowing benefits for rituals performed during their currency, the tithi ranks one-fold, the nakshatra four-fold, the Vara eight-fold and the karana sixteen fold." A later text by name '*Phalita Navaratna Samgraha*' expands on this further by adding the relative significance of yoga, chandrabalam and tarabalam. The resultant points allotted now are as follows according to the '*Phalita Navaratna Samgraha*':

Lunar day = 1,

Weekday = 8,

Constellation = 4

Yoga = 32,

Karana = 16

Chandrabala = 100

Tarabala = 60

Epic period:

Many references to calculations and predictive astrology are found in the epics. As already stated, the exact timing of these periods varies from scholar to scholar, with some conservative scholars trying to place the vedic period around 2000BC and the epic period even later till the 6 th century AD. Moreover it should be remembered that scholars often go by the written records, while the ancient seers passed on the wisdom orally for thousands of years, till it was finally recorded or compiled in a written form. The views of modern historians and archeologists are quite often arbitrary and subjective and at times even motivated. Either ways, the point here is that the sages belonged to the vedic period. Traditionally the knowledge handed down by the sages is considered as revealed, divine and hence authentic. Once Kali yuga started, imperfections are said to have crept in. Any source after this period is traditionally not considered infallible. I will confine myself to mentioning that puranas like the Narada purana deal with Jyotisha quite extensively while itihasas like Ramayana and Mahabharata too have references to eclipses, the Sun, Moon, Tithis, Nakshatras, grahas, yugas etc.

Historic/Agamic period:

The Buddha and astrology

It is possible that the earliest form of predictive astrology is the Samhita division of astrology and that Hora sastra was evolved later. Historically speaking we don't know the exact level of knowledge of predictive astrology in India before the 6 th century BC. But it is well known that the astrologer Asita predicted that the newborn prince might become a renunciant. There are slightly variant versions of this (such as the Pali canon *Nalaka Sutta* in *Sutta-Nipata*) though the essence is same. According to one version Asita was an astrologer while another suggests that he was a sage who came from the Himalayas . According to yet another version many learned Brahmins were invited to the name giving ceremony (namakarana) on the fifteenth day. Eight of them were learned in interpreting

the signs on the body (Samudrika sastra). Two of the many astrologers who were called by king Suddhodhana found that the position of the planets at the time of birth was such that the new born child would be a '*chakravarti*' meaning 'one who would turn the wheel of law'. This could mean either 'the king of kings' (an emperor) or 'one who would set the wheel of dharma in motion!'. It is said that Asita however, asserted that there was no question of an alternative meaning and that the child would grow up to establish dharma by founding a new order of religion. The prince did become the Buddha!

From this we know that predictive astrology was practiced during 6 th century BC itself in India though it is not definitely clear whether it was Hora or Samhita that was predominantly in use (I have used only the most widely accepted date for the Buddha here though there are other versions placing him at even earlier dates). The Buddha being a Gnanis, insisted on Purushartha - that personal effort and discipline played a major role in spiritual development. Since his focus was on Nirvana, like most gnani (the path of Gnana emphasizes Self-Knowledge), he condemned astrology. It is interesting that Swami Vivekananda condemned astrology while his own Guru Sri Ramakrishna was open to astrology; here again lies the difference between how a bhakta (devotee) and gnani see things. The Buddha felt that astrology made people weak. With the rise of Buddhism, interest in astrology too went down (but interestingly Tibetan Buddhism has embraced astrology as an integral part of its Medical studies!). By the time of king Ashoka (3 rd century BC), astrology was out of favor and was ignored.

Golden period in the history of Modern Jyotisha

However after the 3rd century BC, there was a revival of interest in astrology as is evident from some excavations at Sanchi. Around this time the teachings of the eighteen seers rose to prominence. By the 1 st century BC, Ujjain had become the Greenwich of India of those days. Ideas were exchanged and technical discussions held. Astrology was gaining strength and popularity again. Of course about the same time astrology was growing in both its form as well as popularity in the West too under the influence of certain intellectuals from Hipparchus (150 BC) to Ptolemy (140 AD). There was a surge in predictive astrology the world around by now.

Around the 1 st BC thanks to the Saka and Suhana rulers, predictive astrology **RE-ENTERED** India . Greek astrology had its influences on India . Scholars who argue that predictive astrology came to India from elsewhere focus on this RE-ENTRY conveniently forgetting the earlier references to predictive astrology as in the case of Asita. Here I am **not** suggesting that astrology originated **only** in India . It could even be possible that it originated simultaneously in certain other parts of the world in some other ancient civilizations too since some of the earliest civilizations had some connections or even shared a common origin (especially the ancient Indians and Babylonians). Yet it is only India that can definitely boast of an almost unbroken living tradition of astrology, while the other great ancient civilizations haven't left such unbroken living traditions). Based on both internal as well as external evidences most Indian astrologer-scholars hold that Indian astrology is distinctly original. Here let me clarify that I am not denying any external influences on Jyotisha at various points of time. External influences have surely

enriched Jyotisha in more than a few ways. But as far as foreign **origins** (especially Greek) are concerned, such theories are untenable. Since this controversy is not really relevant to our present topic, I will leave it here and move on.

By around 400AD the Siddhantic calendar based on the Pancha Siddhantas was gaining prominence. Here I should refer to the eighteen (or nineteen) pravarthakas or pioneers of jyotisha. According to Kasyapa, the 18 pravarthakas are Surya, Pitamaha, Vyasa, Vasishta, Atri, Parasara, Kasyapa, Narada, Garga, ,Mareechi, Manu, Angeerasa, Lomasa, Poulisa, Chyavana, Yavana, Bhrigu and Saunaka. It can be seen that some of these seers figure as smrtikartas too as Jyotisha, Smrti (especially the Dharma sastras and Puranas) are all interlinked and have a similar purpose. To illustrate my point here I should draw attention to a very interesting text called 'Veerasimhavalokah' written by a scholar king by name Sri Vira Simha Dev. This text is unique in that it combines Ayurveda, Jyotisha and Dharma sastra while dealing with the etiology as well as treatment of various diseases. Such is the place of Jyotisha in India till the modern times. Resuming the main topic of the eighteen pravarthakas, to the above mentioned list Parasara adds one more name - that of Pulastya whom Narada seems to refer to as Poulastya. Another difference is that Narada refers to Acharya instead of Surya. Now let us see the various pravarthakas and their contribution.

The Pravarthakas of Jyotisha

Surya: It is said that Surya revealed the Surya Siddhanta to Maya. But there are three Surya siddhantas according to some- one belonging to the period of the rishis, another one referred to by Varahamihira in his 'Panchasiddhantika' and finally the modern 'Surya Siddhanta' which is a popular text for Siddhanta.

Brahma: While some opine that Pitamaha of 'Pitamaha Siddhanta' is the same as Brahma, a more traditional view of Brahma's role is found in the Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra in the following slokas from the 97 th chapter. "The great sage Parasara said: O Brahmin (meaning Maitreya)! I have described to you the Jyotish Sastra as narrated by Lord Brahma to the sage Narada and by Narada to Saunaka and other sages from whom I received the knowledge of this Sastra. I have narrated the same Jyotisha Sastra which I learnt from them." Of course Pitamaha of Pitamaha Siddhanta fame is not the same as Brahma.

Vyasa: Vyasa deserves special treatment due to various reasons which will become obvious as you read more. Instead of writing anything new, I will quote from an unpublished work of mine here.

""I am Vyasa among the sages", declared Lord Krishna to Arjuna. Such is the greatness of Vyasa. He is the most significant among all the incarnations of the Divine. According to most Puranas, Vyasa is the 17 th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Some puranas even include him in the ten major incarnations of Vishnu. What we call Hinduism today, its entire body of literature is directly or indirectly from Vyasa. He saved the '*Sacred Word*' or *Veda* as it was revealed. He divided the *Vedas* . He reclaimed the fourth *Veda* into the

mainstream. He edited the *Vedas* and made a plan to preserve Vedic wisdom intact for the people of Kali Yuga. He composed the original 'Mahabharata' and thus the 'Bhagavad Gita' too. He gave the 'Purana Samhita' and thus the entire puranic literature in a way. He composed the essence of the Upanishads in the form of the 'Brahma Sutras'. Not satisfied with all this, he gave us the holy 'Srimad Bhagavatam', the book of books, one that takes spiritual love, the highest form of love, to its pinnacle. He gave us countless *stotras* (like Vishnu Sahasranama etc) embedded within the Puranic literature.

Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa is undoubtedly the architect of Spiritual India of Kali Yuga. As Sri Aurobindo said, the Mahabharata is the National poem and Vyasa the National poet of India . Vyasa gave us almost everything that we see as 'Sanatana Dharma' today. His life was dedicated to the '*Sacred Word*'. He upheld Dharma. He authored an unbelievable body of knowledge. He is the most prolific author ever, an editor par excellence. The more you know of Hinduism, the more you realize the greatness of Vyasa. We would not have heard the Vedas in their pristine form without him. There wouldn't be the Puranas, or the Mahabharata, or the Brahma Sutras, or the Gita, or the various *stotras*, *stutis* and *sahasranamas* . Vyasa is thus, the most significant among all the incarnations of Vishnu. For how would we know about the various incarnations, if not through his works? Whatever we know of most incarnations of Vishnu, is through Vyasa.

. Vyasa is the editor par excellence. With unbelievable zeal and divine inspiration, he redacted the Vedas. He standardized the Vedas, the order and the accents of every mantra, which has come down to us intact since a few thousand years. Vyasa is by far the most prolific among writers. He survived the Kurukshetra war and later composed the original Mahabharata, on which, with interpolations and additions, the present structure of the epic rests. Today the Mahabharata is the world's longest epic, and is considered as the fifth veda. The highly revered Bhagawad Gita is just a portion of this great and inspiring epic. The Puranic literature, which originally was said to consist of ten million verses, is also attributed to him. He is said to have composed the Brahma Sutras. The list is endless. Such a gigantic feat and prolific intellectual work remain unparalleled.

. It is said that in each age (Mahayuga), in every Dwapara yuga, Vishnu in his form of Veda Vyasa, incarnates to uphold the Vedas. He divides the Vedas and helps to preserve them for the coming kali yuga. . In this Manvantara, twenty-eight mahayugas have elapsed. Thus twenty-eight Veda Vyosas have incarnated so far! The Vyasa for this Dwapara yuga is Krishna Dwaipayana, the son of the illustrious sage Parasara, who is considered the father of Vedic astrology, for it is held widely that it was he who composed the famous astrological text 'Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra'. Parasara was the son of Shaktri and the grandson of Vasishta, the greatest among sages. ."

The above extracts are from '*Vyasa and Parasara - the lives of two of the greatest Vedic seers recreated*' also subtitled " A story of the fulfillment of a great mission by a father and son" . As is evident from the general tone of the extracts it can be gleaned that the above work was not intended for historical purposes. In this unpublished work of mine, I tried to recreate the story of Vyasa and Parasara from all the references to their lives as found scattered in the various puranas and legends of India . Yet the reader can catch a

glimpse of Vyasa's role traditionally speaking. Coming back to the eighteen pravarthakas-

Vasishta: Vasishta siddhanta has an important place among the Panchasiddhantas. It is more in depth than Pitamaha Siddhanta. Varahamihira quotes 13 slokas from Vasishta Siddhanta. During Brahmagupta's time there were two Vasishta Siddhantas, one old and another relatively new.

Atri: Atri and his descendants were well versed in the knowledge of Eclipses as revealed by the Rg Veda. Since eclipses and the nodes have a significant place in vedic knowledge, Atri is given a place among the 18 pravarthakas.

Parasara: Parasara needs no special introduction to a student of Jyotisha as he is more or less unanimously accepted as the father of Jyotisha. But some make a distinction between Parasara the smrtikarta and Parasara the author of BPHS. In that case, the second Parasara may be placed between 5 th BC and 5 th AD. Reference to Parasara is found in Kautilya's 'Arthashastra' too. There are many references to astrology and astrologers in the 'Arthashastra'.

Narada: He is said to have revealed the 'Narada Samhita' the first among the Samhitas. This text has 55 chapters. The original text seems to have had only 37 chapters to which 18 chapters were added later. The three major ancient divisions of Jyotisha- Siddhanta, Samhita and Hora are mentioned in the fourth sloka. It is mentioned in the text that Narada also wrote a text on Hora called 'Naradeeya Hora Sastra'. This text is not available today. Such early texts may throw further light on the origins of Hora sastra.

Garga: There are many works attributed to Garga. Though he does not seem to have authored these books, it is well accepted that Garga is among the most ancient authorities. Bhattotpala (8 th century AD) in his commentary on 'Brihat Jataka' tells us of Garga Hora Sastra. Moreover he is also among the most important figure-heads in *Jaina* astrology too.

Mareechi: Though there is no extant work of Mareechi, we can only infer that his work must have had been well known at one time as Govinda Daivagna quotes Mareechi.

Manu: He is better known for his contribution to Dharma sastra.

Angira: It is not uncommon to use the terms 'Angira' and 'Brihaspati' interchangeably. It is said that a text called 'Barhaspatya Samhita' was in existence in the past.

Romasa: Some suggest that Romasa, Lomasa and Romaka are all the same. Lomasa Samhita is among the ancient works while Romaka Siddhanta is among the Panchasiddhantas. But Romaka and Lomasa seem to be two different individuals. Both are accepted by some as pravarthakas. But Romaka Siddhanta is of foreign origin (Rome ?) Some suggest that the knowledge of Jyotisha spread from the Hindus to other places and after subsequent developments again interacted with Jyotisha. Whatever be the case,

Romaka Siddhantha has a foreign route of entry as we know it currently. As Varahamihira tells us (in the form of a conversation between Surya and Aruna in the beginning of his 'Panchasiddhantika') due to a curse Surya is said to have taken birth among the Yavanas and taught Romaka the subject. He in turn is said to have spread the teachings.

Paulisa: Paulisa siddhanta is an ancient work again considered to be a foreign one. Varahamihira says that Latadeva is the commentator of both Paulisa and Romaka Siddhantas. Paulaha, Paulisa, Paulastya are the other names which we come across in various places in this context. The Mahabharata mentions Paulastya and Pulaha as the sons of Brahma.

Chyavana: As in the case of Mareechi we can only infer the existence of Chyavana's work through Govinda Daivagna's quotes.

Yavana: Yavana parampara is also among the ancient recognized schools of astrology. Varahamihira, Bhattotpala and Kalyana Verma have all eulogized the Yavanas in their works. Sphudidwaja's 'Yavana Jataka' (269 or 270 AD) claims to be the versified version of a prose work of one previous Yavaneswara. Latadeva has written a commentary on 'Yavana Jataka'. All these three authors predate Varahamihira. Another later author by name Meena Raja authored a work called 'Vriddha Yavana Jataka'. While the influence of Greek astrology on these works need not be denied, it should be pointed that both these texts share more than 90% likeness with Hindu astrology (and culture) and show less resemblance (up to 5 to 10%) to Greek works as known today. Due to such reasons it is debatable whether original Greek works were thoroughly Indianised or whether Yavana jataka (as referred to by the Indian astrologers) itself is only a form of astrology practiced by the already Indianised Greeks or Ionians who grafted Greek ideas and concepts onto Indian astrology. But one thing is certain. The ancient Indians were universal and catholic in their outlook. They did not hesitate to openly acknowledge the greatness of the Yavanas too. A lesson or two may be learnt from such instances by all of us who dogmatically prefer to behave like the 'frog in the well'. Yet one should retain a healthy pride in the greatness of Jyotisha as taught by the Indian seers too.

Bhrigu : Bhrigu Samhita is a text that is quite famous. Govinda Daivagna has quoted the sayings of sage Bhrigu in his text. We also find Bhrigu readings (similar to the South Indian Nadis in some sense) in North India where the individual's horoscope is already found in the numerous palm leaf manuscripts written long back. Interestingly neither Varahamihira nor Kalyana Verma has mentioned anything about Bhrigu Samhita.

(I have come across a Bhrigu reader in Varanasi who allowed me to see the leaf for a brief moment only preferring to read it himself for reasons best known to him. During another visit to Varanasi during the Maha Kumbhamela of 2001, I also studied a few palm leaf manuscripts (with readings for some charts) of the said Bhrigu Samhita at the private library of Sri Brahma Gopal Bhaduri of Varanasi. Here I was allowed to even film some of the manuscripts. Sri Bhaduri has inherited a vast collection of thousands of rare and known manuscripts on various ancient sastras, from his father who seems to have

been a versatile scholar. As for Sri Brahma Gopal Bhaduri himself, he seemed to be more knowledgeable in Samudrika sastra than Jyotisha.)

Saunaka : Both BPHS as well as Muhurta Chintamani mention Saunaka's name. He also figures in many puranas.

As already stated Narada refers to **Acharya** instead of Surya. It is possible according to some that the Acharya referred to by both Narada as well as Parasara, is actually a Jaina astrologer-sage.

Among the above mentioned pravarthakas, the works of five seers find a place in the 'Pancha Siddhanthas'. As already stated by around 400AD the Siddhantic calendar based on the Pancha Siddhantas had gained prominence. Varahamihira too has written a text called 'Panchasiddhantika' wherein he discusses the same. Most of the ancient works are not available today. We come across other works wherein the authors have quoted the more ancient works.

Aryabhatta I

Among the most famous contributions to the science of astronomy, come Aryabhatta's and Bhaskara's works. Aryabhatta (AD 476-523) belonged to Tiruvankur in Kerala though he also seems to have lived in Kusumapura. He wrote the first edition of his 'Aryabhatteeyya' when he was just 23 years old. He also seems to have revised the book when he was older. It is this revised edition that has survived today. I cannot do justice to the greatness of his work in an article of this sort and will confine myself to merely asserting that in the world history of science Aryabhatta is among the greatest of the great. Whether it is the earth's motion around the Sun, the motion of the stars, or the calculation of the circumference of a circle, or the discovery of Sine, Aryabhatta's contributions span across various fields like astronomy, mathematics (including Geometry), and knowledge of Time etc. His works gave a big boost to astrology too as astrology includes the knowledge of ganita (mathematics), gola (astronomy) and kalakriya (Time and planetary motion), all of which the 'Aryabhatteeyya' takes to hitherto unknown heights in many ways. Hereafter began the period when many astrology classics came to be written. No wonder Aryabhatta's fame spread to foreign countries too, inspiring the Arabs to not only study his work but spread it across the world.

Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra

Some say that the Parasara who wrote BPHS (Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra) belonged to a period between 500 BC and 500 AD and that he is not the same as Parasara the father of Vyasa. One argument against this is that the language and style of BPHS indicate that it could be a relatively ancient work, written around the same time as Vyasa. But that alone wouldn't make a strong case. Instances of other good works authored by scholars with the same name as Sankaracharya or somebody else are not very uncommon. It is possible for someone else to write in an ancient style especially if he is trying to make it authentic (I am not suggesting that this is exactly the case with BPHS).

What seems to have happened (according to my understanding) is that Maharishi Parasara taught the principles of the BPHS to his disciple Maitreya. This set of teachings was handed down over the generations. But part of the teachings were lost or at least hidden during later times. When astrology surfaced back again, these teachings were not easily available. Between 5 th century BC and 5th century AD a great astrologer who was either referred to or adopted the name of Parasara, took it upon himself to revive the teachings. The currently available BPHS is probably the second Parasara's attempt to put together the original teachings of Parasara. It cannot be ruled out they could also be the same as sage Parasara's teachings largely. But the second Parasara must have attempted to fill in the gaps. This is one way that we could reconcile the two theories. Of course this is all speculation based on the available contradictory beliefs and scholars could go into hair-splitting arguments on this.

The very process through which the BPHS has been put together in the last century is prone to error. In fact if one starts getting into this, a lot of time will go into this with no definite conclusions finally. The available data is incomplete and altered. It is well known that the currently available BPHS has many interpolations, and individual copies of some traditional scholars from different places vary to some extent. I myself have come across at least four variant versions that differ here and there. Some scholars suggest that the Uttarakhanda of the BPHS was a subsequent addition. Due to various such reasons one cannot take any statement as INFALLIBLE since a lot that has been attributed to Parasara or Jaimini, may not be really true. The words of the later scholars should only be taken as a foundation and could be treated reasonably seriously, but not in an infallible manner. Leaving this controversy aside let me proceed with the story of Jyotish.

Apart from the division of the periods into Vedic, Puranic, Agamic/historic there is yet another division that appeals to an astrologer-historian as far as Jyotisha is considered.

- **Pre-Varahamihira**

- **Post-Varahamihira**

Varahamihira's influence

Such is Varahamihira's place in the history of Jyotisha. He extracted the best of his predecessors' ideas and crystallized the science of astrology by adding his own insights and observations thus contributing to the systematization of Jyotisha. Varahamihira (505AD), the most famous of all Indian astrologers, came later to Parasara. I cannot agree with David Pingree's biased views about the dates of various Indian sages, astrologers and scholars as internal evidences clearly prove him wrong. Pingree places Parasara much later than Varahamihira based on untenable grounds. If that is so, how could Varahamihira mention Parasara's name in Brihat Jataka' (see chapter 2, second sloka)? While one may agree that Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra itself has been redacted and expanded upon many times (even after Varahamihira's times) Parasara's teachings were

already in vogue in a major way during Varahamihira's times. That is why Varahamihira merely refers to Parasara's opinion without elaborating much.

A perusal of various chapters of Varahamihira's 'Brihat Jataka' like 'Ayurdayadhyaya', 'Rajayogadhyaya', 'Grahayoniprabedhadhyaya' etc allows us to draw a list of the ancient astrologers who predated Varahamihira. They are Maya, Yavana, Manitha, Saktipoorva or Parasara, Satyacharya, Vishnugupta, Devaswamy, Siddhasena, Jeevasena, etc. Satyacharya has established a school of thought that goes by the name 'Dhruva matham'. His 'Satya Jataka' is a very useful text to students of astrology.

A more complete list of all the illustrious ancient astrologers who predated Varahamihira (based on other works like Brihat Samhita, Panchasiddhantika etc) includes Pitamaha, Surya, Lagadha, Narada, Atri, Bhrigu, Vasishta, Kasyapa, Poulastya, Maya, Yavana, Visnugupta, Devaswamy, Siddhasena, Poulisa, Romaka, Jeevasarma, Satyacharya, Manitha, Sphudidhwaja, Latadeva, Aryabhatta etc.

As already stated Varahamihira systematized all astrological and astronomical knowledge available during his times in the form of books. He influenced and was in turn influenced by the western astronomers and astrologers. He has codified and verified the principles enunciated by various other astrologers and rishis. He was catholic in his outlook and embraced astrological principles from foreigners too, whom he held in respect. Varahamihira had written excellent books on all the three main divisions of Jyotisha-Jataka, Samhita and Siddhanta. **While Parasara is considered the father of Jyotisha, one can say that in many respects Varahamihira is the father of modern Jyotisha.** It is only later that others followed suit. There are at least five main commentaries on Varahamihira's 'Brihat Jataka'.

- Bhattotpala's commentary
- Mudrakshari
- Subhodini
- Sripatiyam
- Dasadhyayee

Though the dasadhyayee deals with only the first ten chapters, the illustrious author Bhattathiri has dealt with multiple meanings and interpretations for each sloka. Bhattathiri is a famous astrologer from Kerala who is said to belong to the period between the 13 th and 16 th centuries. That Bhattathiri's commentary enjoyed a special status in spite of it dealing with only the first ten chapters of Brihat Jataka is evident from the following sloka from '*Prasna Marga*' , which itself is among the finest texts ever written in the history of astrology- "One who attempts to predict without studying the Dasadhyayi is like a person trying to cross an ocean without a boat". Till a few centuries back it was an established practice among Kerala astrologers to learn both the 'Brihat

Jataka' and 'Dasadhayee' by heart. In addition to the many commentaries on Varahamihira's works, his influence is clearly seen on later authors in many ways. But before dealing with the later day classics it is apt that I acquaint the reader with Bhaskara I and II as well as Aryabhatta II.

Bhaskara I and Aryabhatta II

Like Aryabhatta, Bhaskara too belonged to Kerala. In addition to authoring 'Mahabhaskareeya' and 'Laghu Bhaskareeya' he is also known to have authored a commentary on 'Aryabhatteya'. This commentary is called 'Aryabhatta tantra bhasya' which is unavailable today. Though written around 629 AD his work seems to have been widely followed up to the 15 th century. Aryabhatta II who seems to have lived around 950 AD authored the book 'Mahasiddhanta' consisting of eighteen chapters and 625 slokas. Likewise there is a second Bhaskara- Bhaskara II - who was born in 1114 AD in Vijiadavida village near the Sahyadri parvata in today's Maharashtra . The following Information is based on a silasasana at the Bhavani temple situated about 10 miles from Chalis gaon.

Bhaskara II (Bhaskaracharya)

Bhaskaracharya's (Bhaskara II) grandson Changadeva was an important astrologer in king Singhana's court. Singhana ruled Devagiri from 1210 to 1237 AD. Another by name Somadeva, a minor king under Singhana, donated towards a special school of astrology (matham based on the teachings of Bhaskaracharya and others) founded by Changadeva. It is known from other such silasasanans that Bhaskara's ancestors too were astrologers in their own right. Upto 6 generations of Bhaskara's ancestors have been referred to.

Bhaskaracharya himself authored two famous books- 'Siddhanta Siromani' and 'Karana Kutoohala' both dealing with Gola and Ganita largely. Bhaskaracharya was 69 years old when he authored 'Karana Kutoohala'. 'Siddhanta Siromani' is a popular text consisting of four divisions or parts- Leelavati, Beejaganita, Ganitadhyaya and Goladhyaya. He gives numbers upto paratha i.e. 10¹⁷. The eight methods of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square, square root, cube, cube root, are all dealt with in this book. Permutations and combinations (ankapasa), unknown quantities (such as X, Y, Z) positive and negative values, zero and infinity, are all dealt with quite elaborately. Of course Bhaskaracharya seems to have followed Brahmagupta's 'Brahmaguptasphuta Siddhanta' (628 AD) as far as the use of Zero in geometry is concerned. Eclipses, planetary rise and set, the earth's radius, trigonometry etc are all covered by Bhaskara II. In the yantradhyaya while dealing with various yantras (mechanical devices) to calculate the planetary spheres, he asserts that intelligence is the best of all yantras. The popularity of Bhaskaracharya's works may be inferred from the fact that even Muslim kings like Akbar and Shahjahan supported the translation of Leelavati and Beejaganita to Persian. Without dwelling more on this, I will draw attention to the fact that numerous commentaries have been written on Bhaskaracharya's work.

Kalyana Verma, Vaidyanatha and Mantreswara

Kalyana Varma (6 th century AD), Vaidyanatha (13 th century AD) and Mantreswara (16 th century AD) are some other important names. Kalyana Varma crystallises very comprehensively Varahamihira's works as well as those of others like Yavana while Vaidyanatha models his wonderful work "Jataka Parijata" after Varahamihira and Kalyana Varma. His work is widely acclaimed and is also among the prescribed list of texts for any serious student. In fact it is second only to the 'Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra' in its treatment of the various topics of predictive astrology.

Mantreswara who hails from Tirunelveli district of South India has written a very useful text. His 'Phala Deepika' is unique in some ways. While other astrological works merely mention the Sarvatobhadra charka, Mantreswara actually deals with its use. His chapter on transits is quite useful. He also deals with other valuable concepts like Kshetra and Beeja sphutas.

It is almost impossible to list all the illustrious scholars and their contributions in an article of this sort, with such a rich tradition available, not to speak of the ancient Jaina astrologer-seers and their works. Moreover it becomes even more difficult to list all the sages and various schools of Jyotish like Bhrigu matham, Dhruva matham, Jaimini matham, etc. I will reserve that for a full-fledged discussion on the various schools of Jyotisha in another article though I will refer to Jaimini astrology briefly.

Jaimini

Jaimini's school of thought (Jaimini matham) is a slightly variant and specialized school of Jyotisha . Jaimini has codified the principles of this school in his 'Jaimini Sutras'. Many astrologers hold that this is a distinct system from Parasara's school of thought while some hold that Jaimini principles are part of Parasara's all encompassing classic. There are some chapters in Parasara's magnum opus (Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra) that deal with Jaimini matham too. While it is true that Parasara's text deals with parts of Jaimini, the definitive and more authoritative text for Jaimini methodology is the Jaimini Sutras and the commentaries on it. Whether Parasara's text was earlier or later than Jaimini is debatable. But what is certain is that Jaimini has specialized exclusively in this system

Among the most glaring of David Pingree's blunders is his dating of Jaimini's 'Upadesa Sutras'. He asserts that because of 'the lack of earlier citations and internal evidence', one cannot date the text of Jaimini (and his teachings) before c. 1700! Moreover he even writes that it shows a strong Greek influence! To my knowledge, Jaimini matham is so unique that leave alone a 'strong Greek influence' it is hard to draw even reasonable parallels between Jaimini and Greek astrology. As for the date, nothing can be more erroneous. Even 'Kalpalata' the commentary of Somanatha on Jaimini astrology is older than the date assigned to the original text itself. Sri Madhura Krishnasmurty Sastry (in a conversation that I had with him) opines that the Kalpalata itself belongs to the 11 th century AD. As is obvious from the text 'Kalpalata' certain areas of Jaimini methodology

had already become obscure during Somanatha's times. So one may safely infer that the original teachings of Jaimini must have preceded Somanatha's times by a few centuries at least if not many centuries! For the reader's benefit I will list some of the interesting commentaries on Jaimini astrology that I have come across.

- Krishna Misra's 'Jyotisha Phala Ratnamala',
- Raghava Bhatta's 'Jataka Saara Sangraha',
- Narasimha Suri's 'Jaimini Sutrarth Prakasika',
- Somanatha's 'Kalpalata',
- Nrisimha Daivagna's 'Jaimini Sutra Vyakhya',
- Singayarya's 'Jataka Rajeeva'
- Nilakantha's
- Venkateswara's and
- Balakrsnananda Saraswati's commentaries

Most of the above works are available only in Sanskrit. The 'Kalpalata' of Somanatha Misra is a very interesting text among the above lot. Somanatha is the son of Krishna Misra the author of 'Jyotisha Phala Ratnamala'. While Venkateswara, Nilakantha and Narasimha Suri have commented on the first two chapters only, Somanatha's 'Kalpalata' covers all the four chapters and can be easily rated as one of the exhaustive commentaries. To my knowledge it is not yet available in print. Nilakantha's commentary on the first two chapters is in great use and is the most easily available one. With this brief overview of Jaimini jyotisha I will now move on to yet another school of astrology-Tajika.

Tajika

While some think that the varshaphal (solar return) and the progressed chart are both contributions of western astrology, most Indian astrologers maintain that it is definitely Indian in origin. During the Mughal rule, Tajika did gain prominence especially in north India . Certain Urdu or Persian words in Tajika do show the influence of Arabic (medieval) astrology leading one to infer some cross-cultural influences on Jyotisha as far as Tajika is considered. In fact the Sahams are in principle, the same as Arabic parts. But one has to be very cautious in claiming that Tajika is entirely western in origin as Tajika still uses most of the fundamentals of Parasari though certain foreign concepts have been grafted on to the mother plant of Jyotisha.

British and Post-Independence India

With the entry of the British in India , gradually all that was Indian fell out of favor. Astrology too suffered in general. Yet the secrets of astrology were well preserved in the traditional families, though some knowledge seems to have been lost. The biggest loss of astrological knowledge seems to have occurred during the period of the rise of Buddhism and not during any other time. Yet it is true that after and during the British rule, most educated Indians especially the politicians adopted a pseudo scientific attitude, leading to an irrational public denial of astrology, while during the evenings the same persons would be consulting astrologers!

In the past century, Jyotisha was revived by the efforts of one person more than anyone else. It is none other than the late Dr.B.V.Raman. His efforts to forward the cause of Jyotisha through his books and the Astrological Magazine (founded by his grandfather Sri B. Suryanarain Rao), easily entitle him to be named as the greatest popularizer and crusader of Jyotisha in the modern times. The ICAS too was founded by him. Yet it is some other astrologers who are said to have pioneered some researches into Jyotisha.

Sri Seshadri Iyer popularized the divisional charts with his 'New Techniques of Prediction'. In fact my first teacher of astrology was a student of Sri Seshadri Iyer. Meena's (Sri R. Gopalakrishna) nadi astrology was another innovative thought. Especially his idea of the sublords, based on Parasara's Vimsottari dasa, is a novel idea. But it was the late Sri Krishnamurti, who refined the sub lord theory by proposing 249 subs instead of Meena's 243 subs, and eventually evolved his much acclaimed as well as controversial Krishnamurti paddhati (system popularly called KP).

KP is a unique methodology that combines ruling planets, sublords, Placidus houses and cuspal sublords, the use of Nakshatras and a characteristically different way of arriving at significators that make it brilliant at times. That this methodology gives excellent results (at least with Prasna), is often acknowledged even by his detractors. Even forgetting his use of the sub lord for predictions, he deserves credit for first coming up with a near mathematical astrological working model for the phenomenon of Synchronicity- the reference here being to the 'Ruling Planets' theory. Of course there are no direct references to the phenomenon of Synchronicity in Krishnamurti's work. Nor does he seem to be aware of Carl Jung's work on Synchronicity. But the link is obvious to a serious student of both psychology as well as astrology. In fact many good astrologers laid emphasis on the use of nakshatras in the sixties and seventies. From Krishnamurti to Seshadri Iyer, the role of nakshatra as the sukshma (subtle) lord, received more prominence. In fact Krishnamurti called his methodology, 'Stellar astrology'. These two astrologers have influenced many students.

In the modern times among the generation of senior astrologers, though many other scholars like the late Sri D.V.Subba Rao, Prof.P.S.Sastri, Sri Madhura Krishnamurty Sastry and a host of others deserve mention, one name stands head and shoulders above all others for forwarding the cause of Indian astrology as also for inspiring thousands of astrology lovers and students. It is none other than Sri K. N. Rao, around whom, grew the

largest body of astrologers. His role in moulding and guiding a whole generation of astrologers is awe-inspiring. He has guided groups of astrologers in conducting researches, trying to validate the replicability of certain astrological principles, often giving his own ideas for others to research. Whether or not one agrees with all his views, one thing cannot be denied even by his detractors - his role in inculcating a scientific temper among vedic astrologers, persuading astrologers not to be dogmatic, but be liberal in interpreting the classical works and finally in re-popularizing the varga charts by demonstrating their use (even with respect to the varga charts I consider his contribution to be at least as valuable or even more than Sri Seshadri Iyer's).

Jyotisha in the West

Though there were quite a few people studying Jyotisha in the west since decades back, it was only the nineties that saw Jyotisha pick up more momentum in the west, especially the US . The western disciples of gurus like Paramahamsa Yogananda, Srila Prabhupada, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, and many others also contributed to the growing interest in Jyotisha in the west. The formation of the American Council of Vedic Astrology due to the efforts of David Frawley and group has resulted in a definite growth of interest in Vedic astrology both within and outside India and seems to have inspired other such Vedic astrology councils in a few more countries. The author of this article is the President of the Australian Council of Vedic Astrology which was founded in the late nineties by Keven Barrett. Other councils such as the British Council too deserve a mention.

The revival of Jyotisha

All this has led to the revival of Jyotisha in a big way, thanks to the internet too. The present Indian government's efforts to introduce Jyotisha courses in the Universities, comes at an interesting juncture. Today Jyotisha is at a vital phase of rejuvenation. It is going through many changes, both positive and negative.

Any art or science is bound to benefit when foreigners study it. Western astrologers will be able to add to the richness of Jyotisha, their ideas and views. While the general advantage of cross-cultural interactivity and the resultant liberalization of interpretation of the principles, along with the decline in dogmatism are encouraging, there may be another side to it. Lack of knowledge of the background of Jyotisha, cultural gap (with the resultant half-knowledge) and bastardization of some jyotisha techniques where they ought to remain pristine, are some things that worry some traditional jyotishis. Yet the Universe knows how to take care of itself. Eventually in the coming decade, a new phase or rebirth of Jyotisha is bound to occur. Jyotisha will be popular the world over, with more and more astrologers switching to, or at least learning Jyotish.

Tradition- a dual edged sword

One last word. Vedic astrologers have one big advantage that astrologers of other traditions probably have in a lesser measure- a rich body of knowledge, oral and written,

as well as known and hidden. Yet it should be remembered that the available data is incomplete and altered. Due to various reasons, certain places have been altered, new verses inserted, and so on. A lot that is attributed to sages like Parasara or Jaimini may not be really authentic. While this is the case with the so-called teachings of the sages, we should be open to the fact that the works of later authors could be erroneous here and there. Of course they derived their ideas from the teachings of the sages. While they are all brilliant, couldn't we be open to the fact that they could also make some mistakes. Aren't there enough contradictions? So is it really worth repeating verses like parrots? Shouldn't we investigate first into the truth behind some dictums? Do they work as they are? Or do we need any research or modifications? What I am suggesting is that if we can doubt some words of a 20 th century scholar, how can we blindly think that a 15 th or 16 th century scholar, or for that matter, any other scholar is infallible? I am not questioning tradition here. All I am saying is that tradition shouldn't become binding. The rich base that these great minds gave us should be valued, but cannot be taken blindly. Most literature should be taken as a starting point, but not blindly in an unquestioning manner. Do western astrologers take Ptolemy or Hipparchus or anyone else as an infallible authority as some of us do with a Mantreswara or Vaidyanatha? Though they are all brilliant, can't we be open to change and a healthy research mind? Faith and perseverance will surely help, but will not further the cause of the subject. So what do we do? Lapse into inaction and despair? No. We should be cautious when we take certain verses literally.

Where do we draw the line? No one can say anything definitely. I can only say what I myself do. Take the words of the sages reverentially, but keep in mind that the available data is incomplete and altered. Treat the scholars' (human) works as the foundation, but have a healthy questioning attitude. Try new things to see if they really work. Be open to good ideas wherever they come from. Tradition has its role. Undeniably we are very lucky to have such a rich base handed down to us. But we cannot stop there. When in doubt over a scholar's opinion, a saint's words are taken as more authoritative. In all matters of basic spiritual principles, the teachings of the saints may be considered from time to time.

One can pray and hope for guidance and be open to the truth in whatever form or wherever it comes from. If there are certain techniques in Western astrology that can enhance our understanding or practice of Jyotisha as an art or science, we should gladly be open to studying them. Science cannot stagnate. Each generation has to contribute something to further our knowledge. While this is applicable to Jyotisha too as a science, the spiritual foundations of Jyotish will remain unchanged, for they are based on certain timeless truths. The spiritual principles of Jyotish are based on relatively higher occult truths and this part of Jyotisha will not change. Any attempt to tamper with these principles will break the very foundations of Jyotisha. As JK proclaimed, "Truth is a pathless land". No country or religion or path can claim it exclusively. Salutations to all the brilliant astrologers! Salutations to all the sages who revealed the divine knowledge! Salutations to the One radiant Self that shines in all!

Post script

There is a general trend, a shift in paradigm since the last century with the progress in Quantum physics, which has influenced all areas of human knowledge. Nichola Tesla, an eminent physicist opined that, "The day science begins to study non-physical phenomena, it will make more progress in one decade than in all the previous centuries of its existence." Quantum physics has already opened a dialogue with other arts and sciences. Art, philosophy, poetry, physics, psychology, medicine and astrology, are all beginning to meet again as they did in the ancient times. Multidisciplinary studies into the cross roads between some of these fields will interest more and more seekers, eventually leading us 'Back to our Cosmic Roots'- the One Source of all.

What will be its impact on Astrology as an **academic** subject? **While the spiritual foundations of Jyotisha are unchanging and timeless in some sense, the APPROACH to astrology could be influenced by the times and the paradigm shift.** Astrology will sooner or later have to be ready for its new (?) role. A strong influence of Humanistic and/or Transpersonal psychology is increasingly evident on a large number of intellectuals during the modern times. Carl Jung's works have begun to influence some in the Jyotisha camp too, while most western astrologers are already looking at astrology through the eyes of modern psychology. Yet one should not mistake the superficial approach to psychology that *some* western astrologers adopt in the name of "psychological readings". Likewise one shouldn't mistake the fatalistic approach to life that some eastern astrologers adopt in the name of *karma*. Most vedic astrologers feel that psychological astrology is for lesser brains who dare not predict, while most tropical astrologers are wary of and look down upon "fortune telling", as they refer to predicting. As an astrologer who studied and practiced both the approaches, I feel that both are wrong. ***How can one predict without understanding the psychological roots? On the other hand how would one be sure that all these psychological readings are right unless one is able to predict fairly well based on one's understanding of such psychological roots.*** After all, any science does try to predict, though in a different sense. One has to pay tribute to Indian astrology for keeping alive the tradition of predictive astrology in tact. Nowhere else in the world is astrology a continuous living tradition as it has been in India .

I feel that the primary purpose of astrology is not fortune telling, but an exploration of consciousness, a journey into the psyche, into the unconscious forces which stem from the past *vasanas* , into the 'shadow' (a term used by Carl Jung which comes close to the tantric *papa purusha*), into the universe that we have within us, into the conflict between the opposing forces and the process of attaining equilibrium. Of course these forces manifest as our (as well as others') reactions to situations, situations that we attract to ourselves because of these unconscious drives (*vasanas* and *samskaras*), which thus indirectly influence our life path. Fortune telling based on such symbols of the psyche like the horoscope, dreams, omens etc is the most ordinary usage of this knowledge, albeit an application prone to error due to various factors. Nevertheless astrology can help us understand our karma, especially the hidden or unseen factors that shape our life as our own karmic forces, and thereby encourage us to take responsibility for our actions. But

the highest benefit of a study of this kind of a subject is Self-actualization or individuation- a process that assists the individual in an expression of one 'self', taking one to the final stages of Nirvana. Astrology can help an individual in integrating the many facets of the psyche to become "ONE'-SELF". When this happens the individual feels a sense of psychic "wholeness", which is a natural state of equilibrium. Don't the ancient texts promise that anyone who studies and teaches astrology is assured of final liberation (*moksha*)? Perhaps that is the ultimate goal of a spiritual system like astrology and the above is only a modern way of saying the same.

The Nine Grahas

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

Every horoscope has 12 rashis (signs), 9 grahas (loosely translated as planets and 27 nakshatras (constellations/lunar mansions). The interrelationship of these 3 factors reveals an ocean of information on which the entire edifice of astrology is built.

Everything in the manifest universe has to come under the vibration of nine principles of energy. These principles are not to be confused with their manifestations. However big or small, everything works accordance to the same plan. Knowledge of one manifestation can lead to an inference about another. Thus there is a reflection between the microcosm and the macrocosm. As above, so is below - a spiritual or cosmic law.

The number seven - the seven colours, seven musical notes, seven continents and seven charkas, the seven planes of reality are linked to the seven grahas or planets. These planets are listed below:

- · **Sun**
- · **Moon**
- · **Mars**
- · **Mercury**
- · **Jupiter**
- · **Venus**
- · **Saturn**

These are the basis of the weekdays in this very order. But beyond the visible spectrum of seven colours, there are the ultraviolet (Rahu) and infrared areas (Ketu). These are not visible, but very powerful. Thus, corresponding to the 9 numbers, we have the nine

grahas, which represent the nine planetary principles of energy. Just as any new number still is a combination of the primary 9 numbers, the nine grahas are sufficient to have a complete picture.

As already stated, everything in the manifest universe can be classified under any one of these 9 planets. The same can be applied with the 12 signs and 27 nakshatras. In other words, everything is signified by these factors. So we have different significations for each of these. The first step is to know (and understand) their significations. Karakatwas (Significations) should be mastered for any real progress in understanding astrology.

Apart from this there are subtle, spiritual principles behind every point of astrological reasoning. The more one understands these basics well, the more refined and dependable will be one's knowledge of astrology. All advanced techniques depend on the simple basics. Focus on them. Try to reflect upon what you learn. Memorize them gradually. Master them finally.

Extra-saturnine planets in Vedic Astrology: It is often asked whether Vedic astrology permits the use of the extra- saturnine planets. Strictly speaking most orthodox astrologers may not agree. Some Puranas refer to an insulating zone beyond Saturn called the lokaloka mountains, anything beyond which cannot influence us powerfully. But there seems to be proof that the ancients were probably aware of these planets. Some authors claim that the sage Vyasa was aware of the extra-saturnine planets and that he had given the positions of the planets at the time of the great war of Kurukshetra (Mahabharata). Other than the known planets, certain unidentified planets were also given. Working the positions of the newly rediscovered planets backwards, it is claimed that they are the same as the extra-saturnine planets. Arguably mentioning the positions doesn't necessarily mean endorsing the use of these planets for predictive purposes. It is hard to take sides with the level of research in this area being very low. If at some point in the future, they are accepted into Jyotish, probably they might be given (if at all) a secondary status. Let me explain myself clearly lest I am misunderstood.

The grahas are not the same as planets. A graha is that which "pulls or seizes" under its control. So there may be a thousand or million bodies floating out there in space. They may be planets, asteroids or anything else. But do they have any pull or influence on us? Here the pull does not refer to gravitational pull, but the subtle pull that a graha seems to exercise over us. There are many numbers. But there are only 9 fate numbers. In reality any other new number can be broken down to get one of these 9 fate numbers. Thus it is an accepted metaphysical or occult truth, that there are only 9 principles of energy or grahas. They are beyond our idea of the solar system. They are relatively more transcendental, though not the ultimate. Every solar system, every loka, every plane of existence has these nine principles manifesting in some manner. They may manifest in a million forms. So even Uranus, Neptune and Pluto come under the nine principles of energy (grahas). Perhaps Uranus is a secondary manifestation of the graha (principle of energy) called Rahu, while Neptune could be a secondary manifestation of Ketu. But secondary manifestations cannot be given the status of a graha. A representative is not equal to the main principle.

Only the grahas have a role in the Dasha system. Even an attempt to tamper with the dashas by including anything new will lead to a breakdown of the whole logic of Vedic astrology. But that does not preclude us from using them in other ways. Ketu is considered as more transcendental, since he is the signifier of liberation (moksha karaka). Perhaps Jaimini did not include him in the list of contenders for temporary significators (chara karakas) since the one who holds the key to moksha cannot himself contend for the atmakaraka's post! Some dashas don't have Ketu, but we still use Ketu's role in the chart. More research has to be done to definitely conclude about the role of these extra-saturnine planets. Still one thing seems to be certain. Even if they are accepted, they will be delegated a secondary role, or even an optional role, in Vedic astrology. They will never get the same status as the nine grahas. It goes against the very foundations of the occult laws that are part of Jyotish foundations.

The different schools of Vedic Astrology

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

Vedic astrology is a vast ocean and primarily rests on the principles enunciated by Parasara. The Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra (BPHS) is considered a great source book and is Parasara's magnum opus. Conventional Vedic astrology largely follows what is referred to by some as the **Parasari system**. Apart from this there are certain other schools of vedic astrology which either use different methodologies or have expanded upon some areas of Parasara's thought. **Jaimini matham** (school of thought) is one such. While the BPHS deals with the main principles of Jaimini matham, the definitive text for Jaimini is the Jaimini Sutras by Jaimini. Another school of thought that expands and builds upon certain areas of Parasara's thought is the **Dhruva matham**. Satyacharya has evolved a very effective methodology which developed into the Dhruva matham. In addition we have **Bhrigu matham** based on sage Bhrigu's ideas. The **South Indian nadis** have their own school of thought and have left a rich database in the form of manuscripts. In addition to the above mentioned schools and versions, another very popular school is the Tajika sastra. **Tajika** seems to have gained prominence during the Mughal rule, especially in north India. Certain Urdu or Persian words in Tajika do show the influence of Arabic (medieval) astrology leading one to infer some cross-cultural influences on Jyotish as far as Tajika is considered. In fact the Sahams are in principle, the same as Arabic parts. But one has to be very cautious in claiming that Tajika is entirely western in origin since it seems highly probable that earlier Indian astrologers knew both solar returns and progressions too, at least in principle.

The different schools of Jyotish:

- **Parasari**
- **Jaimini**
- **Dhruva matham**
- **Bhrigu matham**
- **Tajika**
- **South Indian nadis**

SWARA THE BREATH OF MAHESWARA

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

The human brain is undoubtedly one of the most amazing, incredible and wondrous of Nature's creation. It contains twelve thousand million cells and each of these cells has an estimated five hundred thousand possible interconnections that we know of. It is said that when the mathematics is computed there are more possible interconnections in the brain than there are atoms in the universe!

The upper brain has two parts the right and left hemispheres. Scientific study of the hemispheres of the brain by Roger Sperry H.S. Gazzaniga and others has shown us specialization of function in each hemisphere. The left side of the brain is usually associated with speed, logic, analysis, time and linear function where as the right side is concerned with intuitive feeling, spatial, holistic in function, and does not require linear structured analysis for its knowledge.

The Right hemisphere controls the left side of the body while the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body .

BEHAVIOUR ASSOCIATED WITH LEFT AND RIGHT HEMISPHERES:-

Left brain:

- Rational
- Objective
- Law
- Math
- Extravert
- Active
- Temporal
- Thinking
- Logic
- Intellect
- Analysis
- Digital
- Rich and Varied Vocabulary
- Recognition and grasping powerless
- Imaginal perception defective
- Recalls names of objects easily

- Verbal
- Speech
- Power of conversation increased
- Answers are give in detailed explanation

Right brain

- Mystical
- Subjective
- Art
- Poetry
- Introvert
- Passive
- Here and now
- Feeling
- Emotion
- Intuition
- Understanding
- Analog
- Rich imagery
- Recognizes faster
- Imaginal perception improved
- Recognizes objects easily but cannot recall the name
- Non verbal or Spatial
- Diminished capacity for speech
- Difficulty in conversing
- Short and simple answers
- Silent

- Talkative
- Explicit
- Partial
- Cannot distinguish between male and female sounds
- female sounds
- Pingala Nadi
- Solar
- Masculine
- Implicit
- Holistic
- Can distinguish between male and female
- Recognizes non verbal sounds like tones and tunes
- Ida Nadi
- Lunar
- Féminine

The relative independence of the two hemispheres is apparent in everyday life. Studies done on 'split - brain' patients show that they appear entirely normal after the surgery. In these patients in an attempt to treat severe cases of grandmal epilepsy, they cut the corpus callosum, the main bundle of neural fibers connecting the left and right hemispheres of the neocortex. The normal behavior and appearance of 'split-brain' patients in itself suggests that the function of corpus callosum is subtle. It is vital not to overestimate the separation of functions in a normal human being. The existence of so complex a cabling system as the corpus callosum must mean that interaction of the hemispheres is a vital human function. In more complex, difficult and highly valued human activities, co-operation between left and right hemispheres becomes a necessity.

Most of the time majority of us functions from a single mode or there is a predominance of left hemisphere over the right. All activities that are governed by the left hemisphere like writing, thinking, speech, math etc., receive priority from most people's point of view especially in the materialistic world.

Science itself seems to be mostly a product of the left hemisphere, though insights often require the help of the right hemisphere also. The western society mostly has a leaning towards left hemisphere mode of living while the ancient eastern cultures seem to at least theoretically lean towards a predominantly right hemisphere mode of existence.

The fact that eighty percent of us are right handed shows the leaning towards left hemisphere. (It should be remembered that the left hemisphere controls the right hand). A closer look would reveal that human languages have built into them a polarity, a veer to the right.

"Right" is associated with correct behavior, legality, high moral principles and masculinity. "Left" is associated with weakness, cowardice, and diffusiveness of purpose, evil and femininity. Words like 'Righteous', 'Rights', 'in his right mind' etc., are examples for the same.

On the other hand words like 'sinister' (the Latin word for left", 'Gauche' the French word for left, 'Gawky' and 'left handed compliment' are all used in a negative sense. The Italian 'Mancino', for 'left' signifies 'deceitful'. In one etymology, 'left' comes from 'Lyft', the Anglo-sax for 'weak' or worthless.

'Right' in the legal sense (as action in accord with the rules of society) and 'Right' in the logical sense (as the opposite of wrong) are also common place in many languages. The nobles were always placed on the king's right. In pre-industrial societies (and in countries like India even to this day), where the toilet paper is not used after defecation, generally for personnel hygiene one hand is used since it is aesthetically unappealing and also involves a serious risk of transferring disease to others as well as to oneself. The simplest precaution is to greet and eat with the other hand. Without exception, in pre-technological human societies and societies where it is still in existence, it is the left hand that is used for toilet functions and right for greeting and eating. Right from childhood we are taught to use the right hand for all works that are considered proper and noble.

Occasional lapses from this convention are often viewed with horror. In traditional societies there are firm strictures against even reaching for an object or money with the left. Even among the various schools of Tantra, the school that makes use of the so-called 'Pancha Makaras' i.e. Wine, Flesh, Fish, Grain and Coition (sex) literally is termed 'Vama marga', the literal meaning being 'left path'. The left/right distinction runs deep into the past of our species.

While there is a definite trend to separate modes of function nowadays, each hemisphere must work in an integrated fashion. Admitting the validity of both modes of functioning-left hemisphere and right hemisphere- we must ponder if they are equally effective and useful in all circumstances. No doubt the right hemisphere's intuitive thinking may perceive patterns and connections too difficult for the left hemisphere, but it may also detect patterns where none exist. Along with the intuitive creative genius of right hemisphere we equally need the verbal analytic intellectual thinking of the left hemisphere.

Only when both the hemispheres of the brain are working together can we appreciate the moral of a story, the measuring of a metaphor, words describing emotion, or the punch line of a joke. It is not just a question of being balanced. The most significant creative activities of any culture - legal and ethical systems, art and music, science and technology - were made possible only through the collaborative work of the left and right cerebral hemispheres. These creative acts though engaged in rarely or only by a few, have changed the world and our lives. In fact human culture is the function of both right and left hemispheres in collaboration or in other words, the function of the corpus callosum. The path to the future lies through the corpus callosum. The practices of Yoga and Tantra, are aimed precisely at that. In the next part, I will introduce one such practice, the knowledge of which is considered to be very essential for an astrologer --- Swarodaya sastra.

SWARODAY SASTRA - THE SECRET OF ALL SECRETS

"This science of Swaras is the secret of all secrets and reveals the secret of the essence of all benefits. This science is the crest jewel of all knowledge".

"An astrologer without knowledge of the swaras, a house without an owner, a mouth without sastras, and a body without a head, one never acclaimed".

"If one has the strength of swaras then he should attack his foe or meet his friend. Wealth, fame, pleasure and comfort are all obtained through the strength of swaras".

-Siva Mahadeva to Parvati in "Siva Svarodaya".

"To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heavens; A time to be born and a time to die; A time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill and a time to heal; A time to breakdown and a time to build up; A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance; A time to get and a time to lose; A time to keep and a time to cast away".

Almost all religions state that there is a time for everything in the natural order. When one does anything at the right moment, it certainly has to bear fruit. Going with the rhythm of nature, one learns to swim along the current. In fact, is not success due to the right effort at the right time? Such a time is ascertainable definitely. **Such a time is ascertainable from one's own breath, the vital vibration governing the world, as revealed by the "Science of Breath" or "Swara Sastra" as taught by the Tantras.**

It is said that Lord Siva initially revealed this knowledge to his Divine consort Parvati (Shakti). Today this science is not very well known, and only a few persons still follow it. What is known about it is quite little as compared to the vastness of the subject. This article covers the basics of Swara sastra with a touch of predictive usage. I have deliberately refrained from going into the elements and Swara since recognition of the predominant element in the Swara requires more practice and expertise. A theoretical discussion of the elements will not be of much practical value to the readers.

This science is based on the **nadis** or the **swaras**. There are 72,000 nadis in the astral or energetic body. But we generally deal with the principal ten or fourteen only, and here only 3 of them.

They are:

1. Ida
2. Pingala
3. Sushumna

But before we go further, let me acquaint you with the Tantric/Yogic view of the human body.

According to the scriptures, man has three bodies or forms.

- Gross or physical body (sthula sarira), which is the visible, palpable, body.
- Subtle body or Astral body (Sukshma sarira), which is comprised of the thoughts, feelings, impulses etc that animate the gross body.
- Casual body (karana sarira), which is the seed body that is the cause and seed of next birth. This form lasts until liberation.

Beyond these three is the eternal Atman, the Self or Incorporeal spirit (Asarira atman) which is the Divine spark, that part of the Whole, the ever-blissful which is transcendental.

Corresponding to these three bodies and the real self, as the Mandukya Upanishad tells us, there are the three states of experience.

- Gross body - Waking (Jagrat)
- Subtle body - Dream (Swapna)
- Casual body -- Dreamless sleep (Sushupti)

Transcending these three states of experience, there is the Turiya state, the state of Transcendent Reality, corresponding to the Atman.

The Astral body has within it, our psychic instrument, or Antahkarana, which is composed of mind, intellect and ego (or ahamkara). The casual body takes a physical body as a vehicle for each life. The five elements aid it in this process. Like everything else, the human body too, is made of the five elements. Each of the five elements is contained within another and thus the five elements exist within us as the three doshas (humors). This is our true individual constitution or nature - our prakriti. When we understand these primordial elements, we begin to see the interdependent and interconnected nature of the universe. As the five elements cycle and recycle, billions of atoms traveling throughout the universe become absorbed into billions of life forms. What was once a part of the earth goes into the plants and what was a part of the plants yesterday goes into the animal body today and the same will go into the human body, tomorrow.

This ever-changing cycle of the five elements goes on for a very long time, long enough for it to seem like an eternity. It is said that our entire body is totally renewed every seven years. The five elements continuously transmute into each other to create the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms. Our physical body reflects the element Earth and Water its fluid; the acids and enzymes of the body reflect the element of Fire; the element of Air is the breath and Prana, and Space is the vibration of our very existence. Though every one of us has the same 5 elements within, each has a unique configuration. The Taittiriya

upanishad describes man as consisting of five selves. Later Adi Sankaracharya changed it into the concept of five sheaths or kosas. They are also known as the five envelopes or wrappings. The concept of the five sheaths is not really relevant to our present discussion. But this background is necessary to appreciate what I am going to discuss hereafter.

If you remember, we were discussing the three bodies earlier. Most things at one level have a corresponding manifestation at the other level. So while the nadis are in the subtle body, corresponding to them, there are nerves in the physical or gross body. The astral body is somewhat like a template for the physical body. So more than the physical body, it is the astral body that shows signs and symptoms of any influence. Diseases first start manifesting in the subtle body and take some time to reach a gross level. Most medical diagnosis is done only when the disease reaches a gross level, meaning the physical body. Some people make the futile attempt to scientifically prove the nadis and charkas in the physical body. The problem with such well meant attempts is that they are searching in the wrong place. As I said earlier, every gross structure has a corresponding subtle counterpart in the astral or energetic body. Both the subtle and the gross affect each other. The Nadis actually exist in the subtle or energetic body that animates the physical body. With this brief background of the sukhsha sarira (astral body), let us move on to the actual topic.

NADIS

The word Nadi comes from the Sanskrit root meaning 'MOVEMENT'. In the Rigveda it has been used to mean, 'STREAM'. Thus the word Nadi literally means 'FLOW'. The concept of Nadis is based on the understanding that they are channels, **channels for the flow of consciousness**. Thus in a way, any channel through which anything flows is a Nadi.

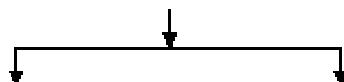
There are two types of Nadis:

- **GROSS:** like blood vessels, nerves, cords, tubes etc.
- **SUBTLE :** invisible channels of subtle energy.

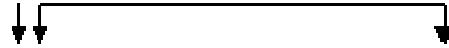
Subtle Nadis are again of two types:

- **Pranavaha Nadis :** through which the pranic force (vital force) or prana shakti flows.
- **Manovaha Nadis :** through which the mental force (Manas Shakti) flows

NADIS



Gross Subtle



Pranavaha Manovaha

(Pranashakthi) (Manashakthi)

Vital energy Mental energy

These two kinds of forces flow through every part of our body via the Nadis. According to the Tantras there are seventy two thousand (there are variant schools like the Tibetan school of Astro Medicine that speaks of 84000) such channels, which cover the whole body and through them the inherent rhythm of activity in the different organs is maintained.

These nadis also correspond to the acupuncture meridians of the Chinese. Within this network of Nadis, there are ten main channels that are connected with the ten openings of the body. Of these ten, three are most important because they control the flow of Prana and consciousness within all the other Nadis of the body.

IDA - It is connected with the left nostril, controls all the **mental** processes and is ruled by the moon . Ida is like **nectar** and gives strength and nourishment to the soul and the body. Ida which is **feminine** represents Goddess Parvati.

PINGALA - which is connected with the right nostril, controls all the **vital** processes and is ruled by the sun. Pingala is responsible for the growth of the body. Pingala is masculine and represents Lord Siva. It is good for difficult jobs.

SUSHUMNA - It is connected to the Brahmarandhra corresponding to Bregma at a gross (sthula) level, through which spiritual force flows and is known as Saraswati. Sushumna is also called as soonya swara. It destroys all actions and is hence inauspicious to start any activity. It is good for Yogic practices. The Sushumna is supposed to be destructive for most purposes and all under takings should be avoided during its flow. Sushumna is good for sexual enjoyment and liberation.

The Kundalini ascends through the Sushumna when it awakens. The subtle nadi of Sushumna corresponds to the gross nadi of the central canal in the spinal cord.

Prana shakti (pranic force) - Pingala (right nostril) - Sun

Manas shakti (mental force) Ida (left nostril) - Moon

Atma Shakti (spiritual force) - Sushumna (Central canal) - Rahu/Ketu axis?

Ida and Pingala function in the body alternatively and not simultaneously.

DURATION OF "SWARA RHYTHM"

Researchers who have studied the circadian rhythm say that the nostrils alternate in dominance every 1 ½ to 2 hours. They also say that in children it is every one-hour. Whatever the duration of this "rise of swara" is, scientific researchers have also found that there is a correspondence or connection between the nostrils and brain hemispheres. In other words, when one nostril is dominating the opposite hemisphere is dominant.

For instance, if your left nostril is flowing freely now, it is your right hemisphere that is dominant now. We have already studied that each hemisphere is concerned with a particular mode of functioning. The left hemisphere for instance, controls the functions of analysis, logic, maths etc., while the right hemisphere controls artistic work, emotions etc.,

Thus by ascertaining which Swara is rising, one can ascertain the dominant hemisphere and do activities that fall under that hemisphere's function so as to go along with the flow of the current .

The nostrils thus provide us a key to tune our behaviour according to the energy available in our body. If you observe your nostrils you will find that generally one is flowing freely and the other is blocked.

When the left nostril is open, it is the lunar energy, Ida Nadi that is flowing and when the right nostril is flowing, the solar energy or Pingala nadi flows.

SWARA AND IT'S RISE:

The act of breathing is called "**Swara**" while the switching over from one nostril to another reflects the "Rise of breath" in that nostril or "**Udaya**" meaning "**rise**" .

When the period of one nostril is over, automatically the breathing passes on to the other nostril for almost an equal time. It is performed with a fixed periodic rhythm through the left and right nostril alternately. This change of nostrils is periodic. Thus the name Svarodaya (Swara + Udaya) Sastra for this ancient science. **A person who practices this Yoga of swara is called a Swara Yogi and he can control the Prana through Pingala and mind through Ida.**

Investigations have shown that when the right nostril is flowing, the left hemisphere of the brain is activated. When the left nostril is flowing, the right hemisphere is activated. Thus the Nadis control the brain and events of life and consciousness. It is said that anything can be predicted, achieved and attained by one who is adept in this science.

The solar and lunar forces are the two great forces that affect Nature. Plants, animals, minerals and even the mighty oceans follow the order of solar and lunar influences. All of nature has a rhythm, a natural rhythm that it goes by. This is at a macrocosmic level . **At a microcosmic level, this is reflected in our breath.**

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2,1,19) there is the metaphor of a spider sitting at the center of its web, issuing and reabsorbing its threads in concentric circles, all held at one point. This image recurs constantly in several Indian works, Vedic and Tantric. Even the Mandala, which is a geometrical projection of the 'whole, universe in its essential plan, in its process of emanation and of re-absorption', has the same concept underlying it. All existence is governed by a single principle, the source from which everything is born and into which everything returns. Exhalation itself is the microcosmic parallel of emanation of the universe while inhalation is the microcosmic equivalent of re-absorption of the universe into the Supreme Being. The emanation, maintenance and re-absorption of the universe are all seen as the exhalation, retention and inhalation, one cycle of breath or Swara of Maheswara, the Supreme Being. **The solar and lunar forces that work at a macrocosmic level are reflected at a microcosmic level in man as his Pingala nadi and Ida nadi. This principle of equivalence of the microcosm and macrocosm is a very important principle that all occult sciences share as a fundamental law.**

VARIATIONS IN THE RHYTHM

A variation of 10 to 15 minutes, before or after sunrise might be acceptable though strictly speaking it is not. Any further variation for a longer duration of one Swara not operating reflects some kind of physiological or psychological problem. If the breath does not alternate between the nostrils and is continuous beyond the normal period of an hour and fifty minutes or two hours, it is symptomatic of impairments of health due to either excess of heat or cold. If the breath moves in and out through a single nostril for almost 24 hours the derangement of the humours (doshas, meaning vata, pitta and kapha) is serious; if it prevails for two or three days the illness is very grave.

Dr. I.N.Rige, ENT specialist, Bucharest , Rumania studied nearly 400 patients suffering from one-sided nasal obstructions due to distortion and deviation of the nasal septum. Of these, 89% of cases breathed more through the left nostril and were prone to certain respiratory disorders like chronic sinusitis, middle and inner ear infections, partial or total loss of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, recurrent pharyngitis, laryngitis and tonsillitis, chronic bronchitis. They were more likely to be prone to a wide variety of distant disorders like amnesia, headaches, hyperthyroidism, heart failure, intellectual weakening, hypo functioning of liver, gastritis, colitis, peptic ulcer, constipation, decreased libido, ovarian irregularities. Right nostril breathers were predisposed to hypertension. He also found that correction of nasal deformities helped to relieve the disease situation.

Thus his research only reaffirms the Tantric-Yogic theory that the nostrils and the flow of breath have many neurological and psychic connections whose functions are not yet appreciated by Modern Science. Dr.Hiroshi Motoyama , Japan has also tried to prove that imbalance in nadis (which roughly correspond to the acupuncture meridians) is related to disease states. **As the Yogis have said, nostrils are the windows to the state of our body and mind .** The nostrils are switches, which can do more than alleviating disease. By consciously changing the dominant nostril to the other, one can control his inner functions like brain hemisphere functioning etc., to do whatever he wants any time.

METHOD OF KNOWING THE SWARA

1. Close one nostril and breathe through the other. Now close the second nostril and breathe through the first. The one that is unobstructed is the dominant nostril.
1. A mirror can be used to check the same. Corresponding to the dominant nostril, the mirror will have a misty appearance when we breathe out.
1. Cotton fibrils also can be used to ascertain the same. But the simplest would be the first method.
1. You can also keep both the thumbs under the two nostrils to find out.

NOTE: *After a little practice, one can recognize the swara without using the thumbs or fingers also. It is quite easy if one develops AWARENESS.

PRINCIPLE OF FLOW OF THE SWARA

Usually the Swaras flow based on a natural order. On the 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd , 7 th , 8 th , 9 th , 13 th , 14 th and 15 th days of the Bright fortnight (ascending cycle of moon), it should pass from sunrise onwards through left nostril and alternate according to the rule of the periodic rhythm. This is because the Moon or Lunar energy is dominant during the Bright fortnight. Likewise the swara flows through the right nostril from sunrise onwards during the 4 th , 5 th , 6 th , 10 th , 11 th , and 12 th of the Bright half. It is reversed. Thus nine days during the Bright fortnight the left nostril is dominant at sunrise while nine days during the Dark fortnight, the right nostril is dominant.

During the first three days of the bright half, Ida flows first and then alternates. For the first three days of the dark half, Pingala flows first and then alternates (see table).

Bright half Dark half

Ida Pingala Ida Pingala

1,2,3,7,9 4,5,6,10 4,5,6,10,11 1,2,3,7,8,9,13

13,14,15 11 and 12 12 and 14 14 and 15

The Lunar or solar swara flows from sunrise for one hour each and then alternates for 24 hours. During the flow of Ida or Pingala for one hour, the tattwas become active in order. For a normal healthy person first air element flows for 8 minutes then fire for 4 minutes then earth for 12 minutes then water for 16 minutes and ether for 20 minutes. (This is used while predicting the sex of a child and some other methods of answering Prashnas. Astrologers wishing to use this should carefully observe their flow regularly and try to study the subtleties of breath. Unwholesome lifestyles like smoking and use of stimulants should be avoided strictly if one wants to develop such awareness).

If opposite swara is active from the first three days of a fortnight then auspicious work should be avoided. Immediate steps should be taken to correct the flow, as it is a sign of imperfect health. The correction could be done through Hatha Yoga.

NOTE : It should be pointed out that the lunar day is not equal to the solar day. This difference should be kept in mind.

Weekdays and swara

Each swara is auspicious on a particular weekday. And one can have the advantage of the Lord of the day as well as that of the swara by choosing this combination.

The swaras with respect to the weekdays on which they are auspicious:

Lunar (Ida) Solar (Pingala)

Wednesday Sunday

Thursday Tuesday

Friday Saturday

Monday

Good in bright half Good in dark half

Zodiacal sign and Swara:

The twelve signs of the zodiac can be grouped under the two swaras

Ida Pingala

Taurus Aries

Cancer Gemini

Virgo Leo

Scorpio Libra

Capricorn Sagittarius

Pisces Aquarius

Directions and Swara:

The swaras are also given directions. Ida represents North and East and Pingala-West and South. This is useful to answer queries of missing persons and fixing time to start journeys, both of which involve directions.

Planets and Swaras:

Pingala represents all male planets like Sun, Mars, and Saturn (though Saturn is a eunuch, being a malefic, it is considered here), while Ida represents all female planets like Moon, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter.

It will not be out of place here to refer to a view held by Hindu palmistry. Hindu palmistry postulates that while both the hands are valuable in reading palms, the left hand shows your prarabdha (destiny)- what you are born with, while the right hand is supposed to indicate what

you make of your life- how you have made or marred your chances. There seems to be some truth in this view. At one level, while both the hands have all the planets and signs in the palm, at another level, the right hand predominantly shows the workings of the male planets, and the left hand the workings of the female planets. Remember? That the left hemisphere controls the right hand and right breath, while the right hemisphere controls the left nostril and left hand, because of a crossing of commissures.

If you pause for a while and think, you realize that the male planets are assigned the right hand and right breath (and hence the left hemisphere), while the female planets are assigned the left hand and left breath (and hence the right hemisphere). The male planets i.e. Sun, Mars and Saturn, are the natural malefics, which give more scope for freewill (remember malefics in Upachaya houses or 3,6,10,11?). The right swara or the solar breath, is like the solar hora (surya hora) and the left swara like the chandra hora. Again the left swara, left hand and right hemisphere, represent the Lunar swara, the female planets. These are Moon, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter, the only planets that have the possibility of being natural benefics in a chart. While Jupiter and Venus are natural benefics unconditionally, Moon and Mercury are conditional benefics, Moon depending on its fullness and Mercury depending on the company or influences. Thus at one level it is true that the right hand shows what you have made of your life through your efforts, like the malefics in 3,6,10,11 would. But at another level, the influence of all the planets and signs are seen in both the hands. Actually Swara sastra, Samudrika sastra and Jyotish sastra, all indicate the same in different ways. A study of one sastra enhances our understanding of the other.

METHOD OF CHANGING THE SWARA:-

- Whenever there is a necessity, one should lie down for a while sideways on the side of which the nostril is flowing at the moment. Soon the other nostril will start flowing. For instance, lying on the left side will induce breathing through the right nostril. Putting a small cushion under the armpit and pressing it with your bodyweight will help you further.

- Sit down calmly and gaze towards the side of the nostril that is not operating. The first method is more effective. The adept can change the swara at his will.

WHEN TO CHANGE THE NOSTRIL:

1. When the nostril of the day is not the same as the operating nostril.
2. When one wants to do an activity that should be done in the opposite swara.
3. In cases of diseases-physiological or psychological
4. If any swara keeps dominantly operating for more than two hours.

ACTIVITIES TO BE PERFORMED DURING A PARTICULAR SWARA

1. It should be remembered that the Right half of the body is male and controlled by Solar energy, while the left half is lunar or female.
2. The right side of the body (including the right nostril) is controlled by the left hemisphere and vice versa.
3. Solar energy means all male planets like Sun, Mars, and Saturn while Lunar energy means all female planets like Moon, Mercury, Venus and Jupiter. Hence every Sunday, Tuesday and Saturday the right nostril works with the ruling planet of the day for one hour; half an hour before sunrise it changes and the nostril of the day takes over.
4. All activities that require physical strength (vitality) need Solar energy and hence come under right nostril activities while all activities that require emotional strength are left nostril activities.
5. The dominance of right nostril during the night and the left during the day makes one healthy, wealthy and happy and is conducive to longevity. So one can sleep to the left so that right nostril flows during the night
6. One nostril should not work for more than 2 hours unless you are practicing swara yoga for a specific purpose.

How To Predict Based On Swaras

With practice we can easily ascertain our Lunar and solar nadis and thus use this knowledge for knowing the future. When a question is asked, the astrologer should immediately check his swara. If it is Ida, he can predict success and if it is Pingala, he can indicate failure, since Ida represents the natural benefics, while Pingala represents the natural malefics. This is the simplest possible method, like a thumb rule. However for

more confidence, one may try some other methods along with this and synchronize the results.

I myself use it for confirmation of what I see in the chart. Depending on the situation and what I feel like, I change my supplementary techniques, while astrology remains the primary technique. Rarely I use the swaras independently to predict quickly in cases requiring a simple yes or no answer, but in that case I synchronize the results with some sakuna. Generally, you will find confirmation for your conclusion, if only you can see. Nature speaks to man all the time. If one understands the phenomenon of Synchronicity (see my earlier article on Synchronicity elsewhere) properly, they all fit well. There is no contradiction between the Swara, Prasna (horary chart), Sakuna (omen), Birth chart and Oracle, all of which are various tools and methods that the astrologer uses. The effectiveness, simplicity and level of clarity of the tool or method used is actually all in the mind of the astrologer. And it comes with practice and hard work.

Other points to be noted are:

- Querent on the side of active swara of the astrologer is good; on the opposite side, indicates failure.
- If both the querent's and the astrologer's active swara is same then it is inauspicious.
- If Sushumna continues for a very long time then also it is inauspicious.

Astrologer's swara	querent's swara	querent's placement	Reply
Ida	Ida	Left	good
Ida	Pingala	very	good
Ida	Ida	Right	very bad
Ida	pingala	right	bad
Ida	sushumna	Left or right	failure
Pingala	Ida	Left	bad
Pingala	Pingala	Left	very bad
Pingala	Ida	right	very good
Pingala	Pingala	right	good
Pingala	sushumna	left or right	failure
Sushumna	any swara	left or right	failure

(See the following table for various combinations)

Other methods :

- If the querent is standing and the Astrologer's Lunar swara is active then the querent has to face some obstacles in his path before the final victory or defeat. If the querent is standing and solar swara is active then results will be easy and immediate.
- Add the number of words in the question. If the question is asked when Ida of the astrologer is active and the total number is even, early victory can be predicted. If Sushumna or Pingala flows it could be defeat. If the total is odd and Pingala flows, victory should be predicted.

RECTIFICATION OF CHART:

With some sadhana or practice, it is possible to gain some level of confidence in ascertaining the swara and correlating it to the zodiacal sign or planet as the situation demands. **After completing all astrological work, then only one may verify one's answer through swara.** Indiscriminate use of this technique is to be avoided. I will not write more on this, since it is not good for a beginner. The mature student doesn't need more, because the clue I have given here is enough for him to grasp the point. But remember, you should have studied the phenomenon of synchronicity in AWARENESS, in order to derive the full benefit of this kind of technique. Moreover through such an understanding you will know when to use this knowledge.

Queries related to pregnancy :

In case of any questions related to pregnancy the astrologer's lunar swara active, indicates a girl and if his solar swara is active, then a male child. Here one has to check the flow carefully as Sushumna indicates abortion, miscarriage etc. One can cross check the result with other short methods by using the concept of elements. As previously stated the duration of flow of swara can be divided into five parts and each part is given an element.

Depending on the time of the Prasna, under which element it falls (i.e., during its ruling time in a given nadi), the prediction is given.

Earth- girl

Water-boy Air- girl

Fire-miscarriage

Ether- eunuch.

If both swaras alternate -twins (i.e., if the swara changes at the time of the query).

This part is not easy and hence, it is recommended that you should not attempt to learn from a book.

Note: The durations of the flow may vary from person to person, as it requires a natural state of health. So while using this one has to make sure of one's state of health.

If one wants a male child or a female child:

For a male child: It is advisable to have sex on fertile days falling on even tithis. Female's flow should be Ida and male's Pingala. For best result make sure that the earthy tattva is predominant.

For a Female child: Couples wishing for a female child should reverse the above method.

Given below is a table showing the activities to be taken up during the flow of particular swaras.

Activities for Ida swara (Lunar/right brain/Left nostril)

Lunar energy

- Yogabhyasa (Learning Yoga)
- Drinking water
- Urination
- Starting a meal
- Building a new house
- Constructing water reservoirs
- Prayers
- Purchasing and Wearing ornaments.
- Long distance journeys
- Charitable and pious deeds
- Foundation laying ceremonies
- Arranging marriages
- Buying selling and commercial activities
- Starting medication

- Meeting higher authorities
- Approaching someone for getting acquainted
- Entering a house
- Starting academic pursuits
- Buying property or vehicles
- Getting into a conveyance,
- Keeping wealth
- Starting a new colony
- Colonization of a village/city
- Purchase of lands/property
- Buying and selling (commercial)
- Accumulating and earning wealth
- Planting
- Gardening
- Cultivation
- Horticulture
- Buying vehicles
- Wearing new ornaments
- Jewelry and clothes
- Long Distant journeys
- Proceeding on a journey to some far off place
- Prayers
- Foundation laying ceremonies

- Other auspicious functions
- Entering an ashram for Spiritual or inner growth
- Friendship
- Giving charity
- Learning
- Starting academic pursuits
- Debates, Discussion
- Sexual intercourse (women) (men)
- Sending a messenger
- Employing servants
- Conference
- Meeting of relatives and friends
- Back to home
- Arranging marriages

Activities for Pingala swara (solar:Left brain/ RIGHT NOSTRIL)

Solar energy

Intense yogic sadhana

- Hatha yoga
- Hard yogic disciplines
- Initiation into practice of arms and weapons
- Handling weapons
- Teaching war
- Invasion of some foreign territory

- Riding
- Boating
- Mountaineering
- Fighting (commencement of fights)
- Boxing
- Wrestling
- Exercise (physical)
- Starting a game
- Eating (slow eating)
- Bathing, Shaving
- Defecating
- Sleeping
- Making bricks
- Breaking stones
- Wood Construction
- Cutting or pruning plants
- Sale
- Purchase /sale of birds/animals
- Short journeys, going on adventures
- Exorcism (driving out devils)
- Investigation
- Construction & performance of mantras & yantras

- Yantra
- Cruel deeds
- Consuming alcohol
- Stealing & deceiving
- Speculative activities
- Gambling
- Meeting with government officer
- Killing and attacking
- Filing court cases
- Causing hatred amongst two groups of people
- Taking on enemy
- Thieving
- Commencement of fights
- Quarrelling
- Combating
- Writing of books, letters
- Pictures
- Learning / teaching occult sciences
- Interacting with the opposite sex
- Cruel deeds
- Consuming alcohol
- Studying scriptures
- Going on adventures

- Starting a game
- Making of stones
- Shining valuable stones and gems
- Speculative activities
- Any form of communication
- Killing and attacking
- Causing hatred among two people
- Motivating people
- While going to sleep
- Singing
- Studying scriptures
- Learning music
- Sculpting, cutting,
- Chiselling, carpentry
- Commencement of education
- Pleading
- Meeting the king or officers
- Going near some unknown person
- Leaving home

Note: It might seem ludicrous that the above list includes certain routine things like eating and defecating, things that one cannot or need not check the swara for. But if the body-mind is in a natural state, such things happen when the appropriate swara is dominant. Perhaps one need not even try to change the swara, for it will happen naturally. I have included these in the list for two reasons. Firstly to give the reader a taste of the

original concept as one would find it in the ancient texts. Secondly, because it might interest a few academically.

Swarodaya Sastra also gives many more details of the 5 elements (Panchabhutas) and based on the swara, a detailed art of prediction of diseases, sex of the child, divination and answering almost any question. Swara sastra also gives various breathing techniques and meditations for each element (Panchabhutas) as related to the Chakras and a wealth of much more varied and interesting information. Thus the nostrils are switches . By controlling the speed, rate, rhythm, length and duration of the breath, by altering the ratio of inhalation to exhalation, by stopping breath, we can activate or tone down neurological and mental processes so as to achieve heightened awareness, altered states of Consciousness and even the ultimate goal of liberation itself. **Verily SWARA is lord MAHE 'SWARA' himself!**

"O lady of beautiful face! All Sastras, Puranas, Smritis and the Vedangas are nothing beyond the knowledge of Swaras".

"The part and whole of the Universe are made up of Swaras. The Creator and Destroyer of the Universe is really the Swara in the form of Mahe'swara" .

-- Siva the lord of Yogis to Goddess Parvati in the "**Siva Swarodaya**"

The Enigma of the House Systems

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

"Which house system should an astrologer follow"? This is a question that most beginners ask. After sometime a majority do not ask anymore, not because they have solved the puzzle, but because they give up in desperation or let their favourite teacher or author decide for them! Years later, as they progress more and have a better comprehension of the fundamentals, they come back one whole circle and again ask the same question. Vedic astrologers face this problem to a lesser extent because the ancient texts use whole house system. But some traditional Vedic astrologers use the Sri Pati system which closely resembles Porphyry, while KP astrologers use Placidus. So sooner or later most research minded astrologers who are not content with blindly following what has been taught or told, start pondering over the question again. "Which house system should an astrologer use"?

There are at least over thirty ways of dividing the diurnal cycle into 12 parts (this is what the houses are about). The dispute is over what Geometry to use in dividing up the mundane sphere, over where the houses begin, and over whether they have any sharply defined boundaries at all. In other words the cusps are what we don't seem to agree upon. What to divide and how? This is where we seem to disagree. In order to assess the merits or demerits of a particular system, it becomes imperative that we first know the basis of at least some of the main systems. So let me first introduce the basis in as simple terms as possible (and it is not a simple job). I will try to stay away from the technicalities unless

required, and also try not to introduce unnecessary controversies at this stage. To make it simple, I will broadly classify the house systems into two kinds-

- those that are constructed directly on the ECLIPTIC and
- those that are constructed by PROJECTION onto one of the great spheres like the celestial sphere, using the horizon, celestial equator, or the polar axis.

If there is someone who does not understand the above terms, blame him for the diversion I am going to take now, because unless you understand at least a little of these things, what I am going to discuss hereafter will just go beyond your minds. So here we go.

The earth as you all know is almost spherical. It rotates from west to east around an axis. The imaginary line along the axis connects the two poles (north and south poles) running through the center. The equator is the imaginary line running across the largest circumference of the earth equidistant from the poles. This is zero degree latitude. Parallel lines drawn on either sides (north and south) of the equator indicate the latitude.

Similarly imaginary lines can be drawn on the surface of the earth connecting the north pole to the south pole to indicate the longitude. These lines are called terrestrial meridians. Like the equator for zero latitude, we need to select a meridian passing for zero longitude. The ancient Indians used Ujjain for this while we use Greenwich in England as corresponding to zero degree of longitude. Now we have co-ordinates by which we can locate any point on the sphere called earth.

So far so good. But we guys are supposed to be star-gazers. So how do we use all these terrestrial lines in our work? EXXTTEENNDD your imagination. Extend it as far as the space around the earth. At least extend it as far as the zodiac. Now this imaginary projection of the earth in all directions upto infinity is what the CELESTIAL SPHERE is. Believe me the very imagination of the celestial sphere sends me into ecstasy! No wonder it had captured the imagination of most Puranas that wrote endlessly on the ***Bhu Mandala***, describing every minute detail on this grand celestial sphere that makes one feel one with the stars and the cosmos. Resuming the thread, since this is a projection of the earth, even the Celestial sphere has an equator, poles, meridians, etc, of course referred to as the Celestial equator, celestial north pole and so on. The point of the celestial sphere that is directly overhead (for an observer) is called the Zenith and the opposite point is the Nadir. All this becomes relevant if one wants to understand the astronomical/mathematical/mythological basis of astrology. But our immediate purpose is served (kind of) if you now have a fair idea of what I meant by a 'PROJECTION onto one of the great spheres like the celestial sphere, using the horizon, celestial equator, or the polar axis', while classifying the house systems. Now let me repeat my earlier point just in case you are lost in all these imaginary projections!

I will broadly classify the house systems into two kinds -

- those that are constructed directly on the ECLIPTIC and
- those that are constructed by PROJECTION onto one of the great spheres like the celestial sphere, using the horizon, celestial equator, or the polar axis.

I hope that all of us know what the ECLIPTIC is. From the earth, it appears to us as if the Sun is going around us. And we are interested only in our perspective. Why not? The world exists because we exist! The waves had been dancing towards the shore pounding against the rocks for millions of years. And so have the stars been there. But who was there to witness all this beauty? When 'you' come into existence, then and only then does the world really exist, for without the observer the observed has no value. You exist because I exist! After this short attempt to justify what seems to be an ego-centric view (the geo-centric model of the Universe), let me get back onto the highway. Well the Ecliptic is the Sun's path around the earth, in other words around ME (the 'I' is very important in astrology as evident from the fact that we mostly reckon everything from the first house). The planets are all moving around the Sun and hence they are all in a belt that spans upto 8 degrees on either sides of the Sun. This imaginary belt within which the planets seem to 'wander' is the Zodiac.

As already mentioned, the earth rotates around its axis once in every twenty four hours from west to east. As a result all the heavenly bodies appear to revolve around the earth once every day. The zodiac (with all the nakshatras and signs FIXED upon it) also appears to revolve around the earth. When you stretch your vision far enough, it looks as though the earth and sky meet somewhere. This imaginary circle where the earth and sky meet is called the 'Horizon'. Thus all the signs and nakshatras too appear to successively rise in the eastern horizon and set in the western horizon once every day. So generally six signs appear at the eastern horizon during the day, while the other six appear during the night.

The sign that rises at the eastern horizon at any given moment, is the ascendant or rising sign. In other words, it is the sign where the ecliptic cuts the eastern horizon. The exact point is the first cusp. The sign seventh from the ascendant is the descendant or the setting sign. This point will be the 7 th cusp.

If you remember I referred to the nadir and zenith earlier. The point of the celestial sphere that is directly overhead (for an observer) is called the Zenith and the opposite point is the Nadir. The great circle that passes through in a north-south direction through the zenith and the nadir, through the celestial poles and the north and south points of the horizon, is called the meridian. In other words the meridian cuts the ecliptic above the earth (zenith, otherwise referred to as MIDHEAVEN) and below the earth (nadir). The zenith represents the 10 th house, while the nadir represents the 4 th .

Now comes the original question. It is easy to divide the zodiac into equal sections, but are they to be divided equally? Or unequally? Strictly speaking you cannot divide the zodiac into equal sections. Roughly the signs can be divided into three groups depending upon their rising periods (rasimana) at the EQUATOR. A sign belonging to one group

takes the same time to rise as the others in the same group at the EQUATOR. As we move away from the equator, certain signs take longer time while others take shorter time to rise. In other words certain signs remain longer than others on the horizon. Again since six signs elapse between sunrise and set and vice-versa, it implies that during winter when the days are shorter, the signs rising during the day have a shorter time duration. Thus there are signs of short ascension and long ascension. Further, near the poles certain signs may not rise at all!

With the above raised points (there are some more which I will not touch upon so that I don't lose all of you by the end!), it is clear that the issue at hand is not very simple. Moreover when we are working along several oblique planes, just what do we divide? The Ecliptic? The Equator? The Horizon? Or some other plane of reference? Equal house and Porphyry go for the Ecliptic, Meridian and Regiomontanus opt for the Equator, while the Horizontal system goes by the Horizon, and Campanus uses division of the prime vertical from the poles of the horizon projected onto the ecliptic.

Since astrology is mostly about symbolism, probably the answer lies in the symbolism of the great circles, and the various planes of reference used. Perhaps there is not a single answer. Particular systems may work better in particular contexts. One thing that deserves mention is that while the purely Ecliptic based divisions don't incorporate the geographic latitude, all the projection systems incorporate the latitude (of course geographic latitude is used in calculating the ascendant by all systems, the reference here is to ALL THE CUSPS). Space and Time are the two variables that we use in astrology. Those who have studied Relational astrology (for instance ACG) will agree on the potential value of incorporating the latitude for all cusps. Thus the major difference between all these systems is in calculating the cusps. But it is not over yet. Let me introduce the other very interesting problem that the topic is linked to, namely the nature and definition of a cusp.

What is a cusp? There are two opinions here. Some say that a cusp is the beginning of a house while others say that the cusp is only the most sensitive point of the house, where the symbolism of the house is expressed most strongly or intensely. At the very outset, it has to be accepted that there is some truth to the second thought, the reasons being simple enough. Most western astrologers take it for granted that by definition, a cusp is the beginning of the house. But it need not necessarily be so. Why? A cusp simply means a 'point', indicating the most intense point of activity. Where is it said or written that the word 'cusp' means beginning? As a dentist I use this word while referring to teeth as well. When I say 'bicuspid' or 'tricuspid' teeth, I mean teeth with two cusps or three cusps respectively. Like in any other context, it simply means teeth with two or three points. For instance the premolars are bicuspid, meaning that they have two points. Having said this let me say that there is no reason why the word 'cusp' should mean anything other than a point. Now you could argue that it could mean the 'beginning point'. Perhaps. But that makes it an equally strong case to mean the 'middle point' or 'ending point' or any other point. Certain questions arise in the mind regarding the houses. Does the house symbolism stay uniformly intense throughout a house and change abruptly to the next house's symbolism at the cusp? Or do house meanings shade gradually into one another?

If the former were true, by now astrologers would probably have agreed on the most effective system of house division. But the fact that dozens of house systems remain in use, is proof that the answer is not as simple.

Most modern western astrologers assume that the cusp of a house is both the beginning of the house and is also where the house manifests strongly. Even both the Greeks and the Hindus hold that cusps are the peaks of the house symbolism. So we seem to have an agreement among most of us that the cusps are the points of intense activity, where the symbolism of the house is more clearly at work. *If we accept this simple and straightforward meaning of the word cusp, the cusps could still be used for simple things* like looking to the cuspal nakshatra lord or sign lord or even the sub lord, for assessing the matters of a house, without going into a controversy over the cusp indicating the beginning or ending of a sign. But so far as the role of the cusps in determining the span of a house is concerned, the problem still remains unsolved. I will deal with this aspect later. Now let me give a brief run down on some systems of house division.

For reasons of space and time, I will discuss only four main systems here. The choice is based on their popularity with Vedic astrologers as well as their representativeness. Apart from these, I have been trying a few other systems which I might discuss another time (if I feel confident that there are enough people who can follow technical details without losing interest or their confidence in the topic). But only the following systems will probably interest most Vedic astrologers because generally I haven't seen anybody using any other system beyond these.

Whole sign houses

As the name suggests, in this system, the whole sign is treated as the house. The rising sign itself becomes the first house, from its very beginning to its end. The next sign is the second and the next sign from the second becomes the third and so on. In other words, wherever the rising degree falls the entire sign, from 0 degree to 30 degrees, is the first house. The M.C. (culminating degree or Midheaven) may or may not fall in the tenth sign. The ancient Greeks and Vedics used this. Modern Vedic astrologers still use this predominantly. This was a popular, in fact the oldest House system that the ancients used originally. There is no evidence that prior to Ptolemy, any other house system existed other than the whole signs. In this simple system houses and signs are interchangeable. The controversy of the cusps is not relevant at all here.

Equal House System

The cusps are all at an equal interval from each other. In other words, if the first cusp is at 24 degrees, all the other cusps too will be at 24 degrees but in the next houses. In the equal house system, while the houses fall in the same signs as the whole sign houses, the cusps are taken as the beginning of the house, or at least near the beginning. While most astrologers who follow this system, take the Cusp as the beginning, there are variants like the one attributed to Ptolemy. This notion is derived from Ptolemy's description of the

computation of the 'aphetic point'(it is a point used to determine longevity) in Book 3. This method places the beginning of the house at 5 degrees before the rising degree and does the same with the remaining houses too. In other words if you want to know the beginning of the first house, subtract 5 degrees from the ascendant degree. Note that the point thus derived is the 'horoskopos' which is nothing but the point that determines the cuspal degree.

It will not be out of place here to refer to the 'System's approach'. In 'System's approach' advocated by V.K.Choudhary, they use something called the 'most effective point' or MEP, in short. ***The MEP is nothing but the cuspal point, in a whole sign house system. So technically Systems approach is still a Whole house system that uses cusps. It is not an Equal House system.*** In other words, astrologers who use the whole sign houses, use the same cusps as the equal house advocates, except that the cusps DO NOT mark the beginning of the houses and that the COMPLETE sign is still taken as the house. But most astrologers who use whole signs do not use the cusps at all.

SRIPATI

If a traditional vedic astrologer uses anything other than the whole signs, it will most probably be this. The calculation is very simple. Add 180 degrees to the 1 st cusp. This gives the 7 th cusp. Add 180 degrees to the tenth to get the 4 th cusp. Now you have 4 spans or divisions of the zodiac namely 1 st to 4 th , 4 th to 7 th , 7 th to 10 th and finally 10 th to 1 st . Now trisect (divide into three equal parts) each of the 4 segments. Now we have all the 12 cusps. In other words the span of the first, second and third houses is equal and so too with the other segments. This is similar to Porphyry. But the major difference is that in this system the cusp is taken as the middle of the house. The cusp is placed squarely in the middle of the house! To find the beginning of the first house find the midpoint between the 12 th and 1 st cusps. Likewise with the other houses. No doubt it is a neat model. But the equal division of the 4 segments, has no regard for the differences in the cusps based on latitude.

PLACIDUS

This system is followed mainly by KP adherents. Here too we arrive at the 1 st 4 th 7 th and 10 th cusps just as in Sripati system. But after that it differs. Instead of neatly trisecting the segments equally, they are divided unequally. It is a complicated system involving the declination of the Sun. Suffice it to say that it incorporates the latitude, and thereby computes the cusps differently for different latitudes. The other difference is that the Cusps are treated as the house ***beginning as well as the points of maximum house symbolism.

Some Observations on the Cusps

As I have already mentioned, I have tried all the above systems seriously. Let me place my observations before you. ***That the cusps are the points of maximum activity or where the house symbolism is at its peak is something that most of us could agree***

upon. So using the Cuspal sublord, nakshatra lord or signlord to draw some static conclusions as KP does is definitely effective. For instance, the sign lord or sub lord of the 2 nd cusp is in the 5 th house. There could be gains through cinema, fine arts, entertainment, sports, speculation, or through children. Of course KP stresses on the sublord lot more than on the signlord. Or using another example, the 7 th cusp sublord is Mercury in a dual sign in a Mercury's nakshatra suggesting more than one marriage. Or we could take an example from traditional vedic astrology. The ascendant cusp could be in mrityubhaga (a critical degree which literally means the 'division of death') which should alert the astrologer.

Whole signs definitely seem to work. But so do Placidus and Sripati! So how do we reconcile? I use whole signs for all regular delineations. Jaimini methodology doesn't need the cusps or houses controversy. Simple things often work very well. It seems to have stood the test of time. But for all nakshatra dasha (like the Vimsottari) readings I like to check the cusps and the bhava chart. **The whole sign house system seems to make up for the lack of exact house cusps and degree aspects by the extensive use of the harmonic charts. So if you are using the divisional charts along with the rasi chart then you need not worry about the cusps.**

A planet that would be placed in the 12 th by Placidus, would be placed in the first by Sripati. And I have seen cases where the planet did influence the first house clearly. But I have seen more cases accounting for Placidus especially when used with KP methodology. I started looking for a CONSISTENT explanation. There are two ways of looking at this.

Some western schools of astrology like the western siderealists use only the angles (most systems agree on the angles). While using the cusps only for the angles, gets rid of half the problem, it does not stop there. **The kendras or angles are the cornerstones of the chart. In fact the North Indian style chart as well as the medieval western chart clearly highlight the role of kendras. In fact the greeks use a word like 'pivot' for the kendras. The angles definitely are the pillars of the chart as is evident from a study of the yogas- both benefic and malefic- and the symbolism of the angles.** Even relocational astrology places emphasis on the angles mostly.

Without much discussion we could agree on the importance of the angles. But how is it relevant to our current topic? Whether one uses the cusp as the beginning or the middle of the house, any planet conjunct an angle within an orb of 5 degrees will influence it. Sometimes it works with an orb up to 10 degrees for fast moving planets. All important aspects to the 1, 4, 7, 10 cusps can be noted and used confidently. So this explains why sometimes a planet in the 12 th seems to influence the ascendant. The difference between Placidus and Sripati is also that Placidus uses the cusp as the starting of the house, while Sripati uses a cusp as the midpoint of the house. That is the reason for the planet being in the 12 th in Placidus and first in Sripati. After considering the above mentioned aspects to the angles, such cases of inconsistency were greatly reduced.

But the other point still remains. While the angular cusps are similar in both Placidus and Porphyry (we don't need to address Sripathi separately since the issue here is not about the cusp being the starting or middle of the house, and that makes both Sripathi and Porphyry similar) the intermediate cusps are different. It is only here that the assessment of their relative merits has to be done.

A passing reference should be made to the notion of equal houses attributed to Ptolemy. As stated earlier, in this system the house starts about five degrees prior to the cusp. Some use it as 4 to 7 degrees before the cusp. *I thought that this theory when used with Placidus cusps could address the inconsistencies observed.* While it is still possible, my observation that this happens mostly around the angles led me to the earlier hypothesis of making room for the aspects to the angles, while still using the cusp as the beginning point. But I had seen this working well when used with full fledged KP methodology and cannot speak for methods that use Placidus cusps in isolation or in conjunction with other techniques. Extending Ptolemy's method (he actually used it for assessing the longevity and not for houses, as far as my understanding goes) to Placidus cusps could have some merit, though I have not tested it enough to draw definite conclusions. I couldn't do this for two reasons. The first method of making room for the angles gave good results. Secondly, before I could test Ptolemy's ideas much, I got involved in the methodology of certain South Indian Nadis which took most of my time.

A word on the Nadis as it relates to this topic. Some Nadis use a fine division of the sign into 150 subdivisions called Nadiamsas, to identify the nadiamsa that the ascendant cusp falls under. These nadiamsas give a general pattern for the individual. While many people are aware of these nadiamsas and are fascinated by them, few know that there are some nadis which don't use the houses (including the ascendant) at all. They use simple methods such as aspects and transits to predict consistently well enough. Using the ideas borrowed from there, I extended the predictive hints to Progressions. They worked much better with the Progressed charts than even the Natal chart. Of course the simple principles work, whether you use them on the natal or progressed or return charts. Moreover the ascendant (and the bhavas based on the ascendant) is only one of the many (though important) factors used in the delineation of a chart. Other factors like Special lagnas and Karakas are also quite helpful in analyzing a chart (see my other article "**Light on 'Karaka'**". While it might come as a surprise to some that it is possible to do very good readings without the much debated cusps, it should be pointed out that certain schools of western astrology too, like the Ebertins (Germany) have a system that works without the houses. So much for the cusps and houses!

NOTE: I whole heartedly recommend the whole signs in conjunction with the divisional charts as used by the ancient sages. It is a complete and comprehensive system by itself and does not need the controversy of the cusps. Moreover it is a time tested method. I am sharing my observations on other methods in this article for those who are research oriented as well as for those interested in other methods.

Tantra

Back To Cosmic Roots

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He who knows the inverted Peepal tree, with roots in the Primal Being, whose trunk is Brahma, and whose leaves are the Karmas, is a knower of the Real Meaning of the Vedas"

--- *Bhagawad Gita , 1. 15*

As a child, I often wondered what lies beyond the sky. At school when I came to know of the Solar system, I wondered what lies beyond the solar system and if there are other solar systems, what lies beyond them; if there are other universes beyond this one . It would go on forever. Every night whenever I was allowed to go up on to the terrace, I would lie on my back and watch the stars, wondering where this immense Universe came from. As children, some of us would have questioned the origins of existence.

There is nothing that does not have a mother. Everything in the world whether a living being, a form of Nature, or an idea has been generated from another being, form or idea. This generative process goes back indefinitely, prompting one to ask: who or what is the first mother? This search for a definite starting point is like peeling an Onion layer by layer, until one finally reaches the center where nothing is there except the same empty space that surrounds and maintains the entire onion.

The ultimate Reality - the mother of all that is, is beyond all form, words, thoughts and names. All notions of space and time, in fact the very mind dissolves into a primordial pool that is unfathomable. But man always tries to know the unknown through the known. We try to understand that which is beyond the mind through the mind. The sad-darsanas (6 systems of philosophy) explain the concept of creation/cosmogenesis from various viewpoints. Apart from these, the various schools of Saiva and Sakta Tantras also explain the concept of creation. In essence, all these schools of thought explain the same. At root all are similar, the external differences being only due to the various angles from which they approach.

The ultimate reality, the core of all things and all beings is beyond words, thoughts and description. The seers called it by various names - Param Shiva, Brahman, Pure Consciousness and Cosmic consciousness. Call it what you want to, but it is the eternal ocean in which the countless universes arise as waves; the boundless space within which everything is born, grows and dies; the source of all things, the substratum upon which all things appear, the one and only reality which is un-produced, indestructible, motionless, eternal, all-pervading and beyond time and space. It is a veritable zero of vibrationless equilibrium.

While the details differ, most of these schools of thought have something in common. Most Hindu schools are at root largely vedic. What do the Vedic seers say about the universe? For that I have to tell you a story.

I will tell you a story, the story of the universe - how it was born, how it evolved and how the various forms that we see today came to be. In the beginning, long back, in a far-off period, there was neither the sky nor atmosphere above, neither death nor immortality, there was neither the Sun nor Earth, nor day, nor night, nor light, nor darkness, neither naught nor aught. There existed only the One without a second. The whole universe existed in an invisible, subtle and unmanifested state. What we see today and call the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars and the sky was then, only formless matter in its most elemental and compressed form. That One alone, non-being, without a second, the ancient vedic seers called it, the "Hiranyagarbha" - the womb of light. This cosmic womb was all that existed.

The condition of what we call matter today, in the Hiranyagarbha, was in its most elemental form, as Infinite Space (Akasha). In this etheric state, there was an intense vibration, (spanda) which gave it so much dynamism, that it resulted in luminosity and expansion. Thus there arose light where there was formerly no light.

Now the scientist tells us that there was a time, nearly ten or twenty thousand billion years ago when the universe was infinitesimally small and infinitely dense. Then there was a "Big Bang" and ever since, the universe is expanding. At the big bang itself, the universe is thought to have had zero size, and so infinitely hot. But as the universe expanded, the temperature of the radiation decreased. As it cooled, atoms were formed which combined to form molecules. After many more events, at regions that were slightly denser than average, the expansion would have slowed down, caused them to start to re-collapse, spin fast, and eventually give birth to galaxies.

As time went on the atoms within the clouds of gases started colliding with one another increasing the temperature, eventually starting nuclear reactions. The heat given off would raise the pressure and thereby stop the clouds from contracting any further. They would remain stable in this state for a long time as Stars or Suns, burning Hydrogen into Helium and radiating the resulting energy as heat and light. The outer regions of the star may sometimes get blown off in a tremendous explosion called a Supernova. The debris or dust of such a stellar explosion forms many more second or third generation suns (stars). Our own Sun was formed some five thousand billion years ago out of a cloud of rotating gas containing the debris of earlier supernovas. Most of the gas in that cloud went to form the Sun or got blown away, but a small amount of the heavier elements collected together to form the bodies that now orbit the Sun as planets, like the Earth.

Initially the earth was very hot and without an atmosphere. In the course of time, it cooled and acquired an atmosphere from the omission of gases from the rocks. Gradually life evolved in the oceans some three million years back as macromolecules, then single celled organisms and slowly multi-cellular organisms. Then the first amphibian stepped on land, then the reptiles, birds and mammals, till eventually man came into being.

This in short, is the story of the Universe, how it came to be. But this is the story of the beginning of one cycle. Such cycles are endless. The Universe itself is without beginning or ending really. It has always been there and will always be. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* (2.1,19) compares the Universe to a spider sitting at the center of its web, issuing and reabsorbing its threads in concentric circles, all held at one point. This image recurs in several vedic and tantric works and sums up the Indian world view- Unity in diversity. All existence is governed by a single principle, the point of origin of the Supreme Consciousness, from which everything issues and into which everything returns.

Thus all complexity came out of simplicity, heterogeneity out of homogeneity and variety out of uniformity. All this beauty and splendor with apparent paradoxes is the result of the sport of Nature, a Cosmic play, a continuous dance towards order and perfection.

Then who are we? Where have we come from? Whether the story is told by the ancient Vedic seer in terms of the "Hiranyagarbha" or by the modern scientist in terms of the "Crack in the cosmic Egg" (in fact Brahmanda can be translated as the 'Cosmic Egg') or the "Big Bang", the essence is the same. "The stuff of stars has come alive". The living beings of earth are cosmic creatures, products of celestial events - atomic collisions, molecular unions and stellar explosions. We are the children of the universe, children of immortal bliss. Within our human bodies, we have within us a miniature universe within our consciousness, our inner radiant Self, that aspect of the all-pervading Cosmic consciousness. We are the center of the universe. Nay! We are not only the center of the universe, WE ARE THE UNIVERSE. We are its past and we are its future. Ultimately we are not an individual body with a soul, but a soul with a body. Rather with our own inner Self, that spark of the Divine, we are infinite, ever present and eternal. We are part of the whole, call it God, the Divine-Mother, Shiva-Shakti, Brahman or Primal Being. No doubt, we have come a long way from the Primal Being. The branches and leaves may be far from the roots, but it is to the roots that they owe their existence. We have come a long way from our Cosmic roots, nevertheless we are still deeply rooted in that Ever Blissful Infinite Being called God.

If that is so, why do we suffer? Though the Atman is identical to the Brahman who is ever-radiant and blissful, the Jiva (individual) suffers because he is entrapped by the limiting adjuncts (Upadhis) of body and mind. The infinite *seems* entrapped by the finite body and mind. **Misery is not natural to the Jiva. It comes to experience a state of misery because of its association with a body.**

- So the cause of misery is a body
- The body (birth) is due to karma (previous actions)
- Karma arises from attachment and hate, by preference to certain objects and aversion to some.

- Attachment and hate arise from Egoism (sense of 'I' and 'Mine')
- This Egoism comes from indiscrimination.
- Indiscrimination, from ignorance of your true nature, that you are one with the Brahman

Any of the reasons cited (in various contexts) as being the motivation for rebirth, are all covered under some stage of the above-explained process. For instance take the desire for something as a cause of birth. It is already covered in point C. "Karma arises from attachment and hate, by preference to certain objects and aversion to some". So the desire to "enjoy more sex or more power" is nothing but an attachment, a preference for a particular object. So this results in Karma (Karma can be mental, verbal or actual deed (thought, word and deed). Karma results in birth. So in that sense your desire makes you take birth again.

Thus, the root cause of all suffering and Karma is ignorance. The only way to go beyond this, is to bring the light of knowledge. The first step in this direction is to change one's attitude, to retrace one's steps along the same path that we have come down. In other words, the only solution is to go back to our cosmic roots, to become one with the Cosmic Consciousness. That is liberation, moksha, salvation, whatever you call it. We are born so that we can exhaust our karmic debts, so that we may be free. This is the only answer, the only purpose of being born again and again, and thus the purpose of life too, in a general sense. Here the Yogic tradition offers a few paths to suit the varying temperaments. Thus the goal is to manifest the potential Divinity, to attain Oneness with the Whole, the Cosmic. Do it by Work (Karma), Worship (Bhakti/divine love), Meditation (Raja yoga) or Knowledge (Gnana). To say that any one path is the only way is nothing but ignorance. To each according to our temperaments. But in reality we all might need a little of each path with a predominant need for one.

A sincere study of Yoga-Vedanta reveals the eternal mysteries of the cosmos to us. It leads us to the unknown through the known. **It guides us out through the intricate labyrinth that life is, with its myriad pairs of duality. It shows us the way and ultimately sets us free, by taking us back to our cosmic roots.** But the process is quite complicated, since we live in a world of Duality. The One has become the many. We have come long way from Cosmic Consciousness, the Source or the Roots. And we are all born with an unconscious desire to attain unity with that Source, with the Cosmic (read my article on Sacred myth for extracts from Carl Jung's works that tell us that we are born with a desire to know God!). The individual soul seeks its lost (rather forgotten) identity with the Cosmic. SADHANA AWAKENS THAT MEMORY.

The Matrix of the Unborn 2- the Tantric concept of Creation

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

The ultimate Reality - the mother of all that is, is beyond all form, words, thoughts and names. All notions of space and time, in fact the very mind dissolves into a primordial pool that is unfathomable. But man always tries to know the unknown through the known and has tried to understand that which is beyond the mind through the mind. The 6 systems of philosophy (Shaddarsanas) explain the concept of creation from various viewpoints. Apart from these, the various schools of Shaiva and Shakta Tantras also explain the concept of creation. In essence, all these schools of thought explain the same. At root all are similar, the external differences being only due to the various angles from which they approach. While the details differ, most of these schools of thought have something in common.

The ultimate reality, the core of all things and all Beings is beyond words, thoughts and description. The seers called it by various names - Param Shiva, Brahman, Pure Consciousness and Cosmic consciousness. Call it what you want to, but it is the eternal ocean in which the countless universes arise as waves; the boundless space within which everything is born, grows and dies; the source of all things, the substratum upon which all things appear, the one and only reality which is unproduced, indestructible, motionless, eternal, all-pervading and beyond time and space. It is a veritable zero of vibrationless equilibrium.

It eternally alternates between two phases of rest and action, having in it the twin aspects of Self-Illumination and Supreme Power (Shakti), which always remain in a State of perfect coexistence with each other. When this ultimate reality, the Supreme Light (Prakasa), is self-moved to manifest something of itself, there is a deliberation (Vimarsa) on itself, a movement resulting in the projection of the Universe from itself. Thus Shakti is inseparable from the 'One who beholds Her' ("Shaktiman" is another name for Shiva who is said to behold Shakti). She is the universal principle of energy, power and creativity of the Universal Consciousness. The universe is a product of these two in various permutations and combinations, which the poet and devotee see as a sport, play or union of these two.

As we had already observed, although it is restless, "Shiva-Shakti" alternates between periods of rest and action. During the period of action, the energy undergoes many changes and gets distorted giving rise to myriads of forms. It reorganizes itself during the period of rest and thus a continuous process of creation, preservation and destruction goes on eternally. The same Supreme Power came to be revered as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra in its various acts or aspects of creation, preservation and destruction respectively.

Energized Consciousness presents itself as "Shiva-Shakti" in unity, the two-in-one, at the point of creation, which is depicted as Shiva and Shakti in a close embrace, in Tantric iconography. The Shiva Linga itself is a representation of these two inseparable aspects of the great cosmic power, the masculine and feminine in their eternal embrace. In this

Conscious Energy that till now is in a state of vibrationless equilibrium, the first vibration arises as the desire to create, manifest, and express. In other words the one wishes to become the many. This is the first cause, the First Vibration (Adi Spanda), the point of primal stress in Conscious Energy. This results in a separation, bringing forth the Dual from the Non-dual. Henceforward we have Shakti (also called Prakriti or Mahamaya by various schools), which is a projection of Shiva (also referred to as Purusha or The Cosmic Man). The point of primal stress is the mysterious primordial point (Bindu), the origin of all things that are. When the primordial Bindu bursts to form three foci, it manifests as a vibration that is expressed as the solemn and mysterious original sound. These primal sound vibrations are technically called "Nada Brahma" (also known as Sabda Brahma, Primordial Nada and Pranava Nada).

From the primordial sound (Nada), gradually the entire manifestation starts as articulate sound. The articulate sound (Vak) is expressed as the letter (varna) and combinations of letter-sounds go to form the word (nama). Each word has a meaning (artha). The meaning embodied in the name or the word becomes expressed as form. Thus various forms arise. The Primordial Sound (Nada) pervades all creation and is the original source of all the letters of the alphabets, mantras and all other sound vibrations by which thoughts are exchanged. All sounds have meaning. Sound and meaning are inseparable. To the poet and devotee, the first vibration is that of the Divine Mother's veena (a musical instrument). Thus the entire world and the countless universes are the music of divine Mother's veena, the music that flows forth perennially through the veena of the Goddess of Knowledge (Saraswati).

From pure undifferentiated Shakti comes Cosmic Intelligence ("Mahat"). In Mahat, there is neither movement nor resistance, while it shines in its own splendour. Coming down from Mahat, the next entity in creation is the "I" consciousness or "Ahamkara"- often referred to as "Ego". It is not to be taken in the Freudian sense of the word. It is the "I" consciousness, an aspect of the Supreme Self or Brahman, the collective Self, an "awareness" of itself.

COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS (PARAM-SHIVA)



CONSCIOUS ENERGY (SHIVA-SHAKTI)



COSMIC INTELLIGENCE (MAHAT)



"I" CONSCIOUSNESS (AHAMKARA)

The moment Ahamkara comes, all the three qualities (gunas) i.e. Satva, Rajas and Tamas begin to manifest themselves. Till now, being in a supreme state of equilibrium, they were as such unmanifest. Satva is detected by brilliance, Rajas by movement or dynamism and Tamas by inertia or its power of resistance. These three gunas or qualities decide the nature of everything in the universe. Human beings are classified as Satvic, Rajasic, or Tamasic according to the predominant quality manifest in them. Even various foods are classified as Satvic, Rajasic or Tamasic according to the quality that they impart to us on eating. Hence the spiritual aspirant is advised to have Sattvic food, while a man of action is allowed to have Rajasic food and Tamasic food is generally not advised because it tends to make one dull, lazy and idiot like.

To take up the thread where we have left it, various tattwas originate as follows

AHAMKARA + RAJAS (DYNAMISM)

↓

↓

5 Organs of knowledge (Gnanendriyas) 5 Organs of action(Karmendriyas)

- 1.Ears
- 2.Skin
- 3.Eyes
- 4.Tongue
- 5.Nose

- 1.Mouth
- 2.Hands
- 3.Genitals
- 4.Anus
- 5.Feet

AHAMKARA ("I") + SATTVVA (LIGHT)



MIND (MANAS)



Intellect
Buddhi

Emotion
manas

Will
citta

Ego
aham

Thus we find that the entire universe both the gross and the subtle has its origin from Shakti, the Cosmic Power or Energy that creates, sustains and eventually withdraws the

universe and that the countless universes are only the dust of her feet. Shakti is rooted in and is the active form of the passive unchanging aspect which is known as Consciousness or Shiva. Thus Shiva represents the unmanifest and Shakti, the manifest. Shiva is the formless and Shakti the formed. Shiva is consciousness and Shakti energy, not only in the cosmos as a whole but in each and every individual. The individual consciousness is rooted in and is Shiva, whereas the body and mind are manifestations of Shakti. The roots of Shakti are in Shiva. Just as the power of heat and light is inherent in fire, Shakti also is inherent in Shiva. Though they seem to be different in the ultimate sense, they are one and the same. One is the principle of changelessness and the other is the principle of change. Shakti is change within changelessness and Shiva is changelessness as the root of change. Everything in the world, every object from the tiniest atom to the largest star is a manifestation, an expression of the cosmic power called Shakti. To the Shaivite, she is the consort of Shiva, an inseparable half of Shiva-Shakti. To the Vaishnavite, she is the wondrous splendour in the heart of Vishnu.

Shakti is everything. All these manifestations have come from the underlying substratum Shiva. Each and everything in the created universe is no more than manifested Consciousness. Consciousness is an inexhaustible source of everything in the universe, yet ever transcending the things that come out of it. From Shiva comes the Universe as a whole and everything individually through the power of Shakti, yet Shiva remains ever the same. Both Shiva and Shakti are one and the same. This is the eternal mystery, the eternal wonder that ever defies description.

The Tantric Path: The Journey Back to Cosmic Roots

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The journey back to the Cosmic roots can be done by two sadhana paths. The Direct/Vedantic and the Tantric paths

1. Advaita/Vedanta/Direct path : Direct realization of one's true nature by meditation on the Upanisadic Mahavakyas. This is the path of Gnana, true knowledge. The emphasis is on the distinction between the self and non-self. The cause of all misery is traced to ignorance (Agnana) which vanishes only when supreme knowledge dawns. This is the path advised by Advaita, a school of Vedantic thought.

2. Tantra/Agama/Indirect path: This path is an indirect one and generally uses a variety of meditations, rituals, symbols etc., for gradual realization. This is the path of technique. Innumerable techniques are there for all kinds of men and women. Since the direct path requires a high level of spiritual maturity, it is the second path that suits most of us. Reality is grasped by a series of gradual experiences through a process of conceptual and intuitive awareness. Reality is a flow of ever-changing forces. By means of various techniques in accordance with the innate principles of universal harmony, it is possible to absorb the illusoriness of life and transmute it into a Conscious Reality. This is the path of Tantra. Quite often some teachers actually prescribe a mixture of both the direct and the indirect paths.

The essence of Tantra is Vedic while the myths and deities are Puranic in origin. Present day Hinduism, it should be noted, is a mixture of all these approaches. In fact, a lot of it is closer to practical tantra than we imagine. The principal Vedic deities like Prajapati, Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma etc., are not really an integral part of popular modern Hinduism. There are almost no temples to these Vedic deities in India today, while all the key deities popular in present day India- like Shiva (the auspicious and the destroyer), Vishnu (the sustainer), Saraswati (patron Goddess of learning), Durga, Kali, Lalita (all aspects of Sakti) who are more Tantric and Puranic in origin- have hundred thousands of temples throughout India. Most of the scriptures today are at root Tantric, if not in source at least in aspiration. It is hard to differentiate between the vedantic and tantric traditions today, in present day Hinduism, as they are intricately woven into each other. To say that Tantra came later and influenced the Vedic (vedantic) tradition, is far from the truth. Both the traditions seem to have existed since ancient times, influencing each other. Today even an orthodox advaitic parampara like the sringeri math, prescribes agamic (tantric) practices for its followers. Thus both the Tantric and Vedic (vedantic) traditions are co-existent and often intricately linked.

Here I have to tell you more about the much-misunderstood tradition of Tantra.

The word Tantra is made up of two words: tanoti and trayati. “Tanoti” means to expand to stretch, to extend while “Trayati” means to liberate or free. Therefore Tantra (tan+tra) means to expand one's experience and awareness of everything till all boundaries cease, till our consciousness becomes one with the Cosmic, and thus attain liberation.

Tantra is actually a compendium of many other systems; it encompasses a wide selection of the different aspects of human life. Its nebulous beginnings lie in the mist of pre-historical times. It grew slowly and developed spontaneously as man moved through and lived in the various bygone ears. It was not thrust on man, but developed naturally in response to man's needs, maturing with man as he adapted to new situations and adopted new ways of living. It is a system that adapts according to the needs of the times. In fact, it is a tantric belief that old tantric texts will face away and new ones will always be written to replace them. The essence remains the same, but the expression and relationship to prevalent social conditions will be different. Tantra has changed through the ages, not remaining attached to fixed dogma. It is still growing and adapting itself in the new age, and will continue to mould itself to man's needs in the coming ages.

Tantra teaches knowledge and experience of the macrocosm through the microcosm. It utilizes the material to tune into the non-material, the known to reach the unknown; the manifest to know the un-manifest. It is a practical path that teaches us how to fully know and use the world we live in, as well as to full in tune with higher consciousness.

Tantra is an open spiritual tradition that accepts all useful practices and insights including the wordly. It is world-affirmative, granting a reality to the external world however, affirming its reality as consciousness. Thus Tantra does not deny the external world as

totally non-real. It is sympathetic to the immediate needs. Tantra starts where you are. Tantra. Tantra shows us how to accept ourselves, how to openheartedly accept life as it is, allowing us to not only accept our limitations, but work through them. In fact a true Tantric master makes you use the very limitations, your weaknesses as stepping stones. As the Kularnava tantra says, “One must rise by that which one falls”.

Tantra addresses the more mundane problems, by helping to solve some problems through occult knowledge, and in the process, tries to raise the individual awareness gradually towards the higher, towards a transformation, which is its actual goal. It is the alchemy of transformation- of transforming the lower into the higher. Tantra being essentially a mystic affair, ordinary language cannot express the teaching effectively. Hence a unique style of writing was evolved using “symbolic speech”. No doubt, all could read this “Sandha bhasha (often translated as “twilight language”), but few could understand it. This “enigmatic language” is a distinct feature of Tantra.

Intricately woven into the theory of Tantra is the practical aspect of Tantra as a technical path. Tantra is concerned with providing us tools to practically experience the truths that Tantra declares. Yantra, mantra and Tantra, the three main aspects of the path, usually go together. The tantra is the teaching and yantras and mantras are its tools. Frequently one comes across another tool of Tantra, which is similar to the Yantra, -the Mandala. Thus Tantra makes use of various tools like mantras, yantras and mandalas. While a yantra is a geometric representation, a mandala is a visual iconographic or pictorial representation of the same energy. The linear designs (yantra) are more common to Hindu Tantra while there seems to be a preference for the mandala in Buddhist Tantra. But both the mandala and the yantra are seen in Hindu Tantra, the former generally adoring the roofs of sacred places and the latter for ritual worship.

Just as an equation in mathematics is represented by a graph, the mantra can have a corresponding Yantra. The sages of ancient India were able to “see” the truths of the universe through meditation, and rendered them as mantras and yantras. Most of these patterns reflect either a specific attribute of the Supreme Divinity or the Divinity in its entirety. The entire phenomena of creation, preservation and destruction are reflected in some of these geometrical patterns. In-fact, these Yantras (when constructed accurately) are capable of generating a tremendous force that every time the adept looks at it, he or she experiences Creation itself!

“As body is to the soul and oil is to the lamp, a yantra is to the deity”

– *Kularnava Tantra (V.86)*

The yantras are the dwellings of the Gods. The Sanskrit word “Yantra” derives from the root “yam” meaning to sustain, hold or support the energy inherent in a particular object or concept. Simply, a yantra is just an “instrument” or “tool”. In the art and science of spirituality, Yantras are tools of transformation, which aid in meditation, heighten awareness and help in a transformation of our energies. Mahat, (Cosmic Intelligence) the greatest causal force, possesses all sound and light forms. Tantra uses its radiance in the

form of lines of light to give form (through the yantra) to deities, who often correspond to the possible phases of psychic unfoldment, in the individual soul's journey back to the cosmic source. They are a synthesis and harmony of the diverse and some times conflicting energies of the human psyche.

The images and symbols used by Tantra are not randomly selected, but very precise. Thus when a specific deity or mantra or yantra is chosen by a jyotishi after a careful analysis of the chart, or by your guru through in'sight', it is like a tailor made plan, a road map, for the individual's journey back to the cosmic roots. Does that mean that one cannot seek to do it in any other way? No. The other paths of Gnana (a more direct path that requires a high level of spiritual maturity), or Karma (Work done with a Nimitta bhava, without attachment to results), or Meditation, or Bhakti (spiritual love/devotion), are all good. But as stated earlier, the path of technique is said to be the easiest. The ishta devata or any personal deity selected is also part of the same process. (please refer my article on 'Sacred Myth' and archetypes for an explanation of the various forms of gods with reference to archetypes).

The gulf between the parent Cosmic consciousness and the individual consciousness disappears with the aid of the Tantric tools. The tools of Tantra help the individual to recover the lost unity and assume the nature of the original Cosmic consciousness. The tools of Tantra make use of precise, vital images and symbols to awaken the lost memory of our true nature. When this memory is awakened through a series of dreams, visions and other experiences, which the practice of Tantra evokes in the consciousness of man, one realizes the identity of his inner self with the whole, eventually melding with the cosmos.

Tantra- the alchemy of transformation

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

Man is a complex being. He is a bridge between the lower and the higher, a passing phase of evolution, a threshold to a higher domain. Being a bridge between the lower and the higher implies that he himself has both the elements of the lower and higher within himself. He aims at the Divine, but is also plagued by animal instincts; he aspires for super consciousness (Samadhi), but at the same time is strongly rooted in sexuality; he has the power of reasoning on one hand but is equally influenced by ritual, territoriality and aggressive behaviors which he shares with the reptile. Man seems to be in short a bundle of complex thoughts and feelings like fear, anxiety, pleasure, pain, joy, love, hunger, moral urges, creativity, discrimination, jealousy, hatred, sensuality, analysis, abstract thinking and myriads of other moods and shades. He has a lot within him which he shares with the reptiles and mammals, but also has a lot more that is uniquely human in nature. Added to this is the fact that no two humans are alike. Millions of people with millions of perspectives. *Munde monde matir bhinna*. Now could there be a path, a practical one that too, that would take into consideration all these myriad qualities within man's psyche- ranging from the most grossest like sex to the most subtlest like Super Consciousness- a path that encourages diversity, innovation and individual freedom and

help him evolve into the highest that he is capable of, help him to realize and unfold the great potential within him, thereby bringing about his ascent to Supra-human heights? Yes there is. It is the ancient path of Tantra, the much misunderstood, abused and sometimes even prohibited path.

In fact in the most basic sense, "Tantra" means a "book". Any practical book containing information and techniques on any subject is thus loosely called a tantra. Tantras deal with the whole spectrum of human concerns; Tantras are manuals for the entire community. The tantras are broad texts and not specialized in any direction.

Traditional tantric texts are said to relate to the following topics.

1. Consciousness
2. Creation of the Universe (srshti)
3. Annihilation of the Universe (pralaya)
4. Worship of the Divine in various forms (Devi-puja)
5. Attainment of the goals of life and spiritual powers (siddhis)
6. Spiritual practices (sadhana)
7. Yoga- including pranayama and meditative methods to experience the ultimate truth.

Some other topics that tantric texts may cover are:

1. Ceremonial rites and initiation (Diksha)
2. Medicine, Health and Healing techniques, including Ayurveda. Later healing systems like Reiki etc., in fact originated from Tantra only.
3. Different levels of awareness (lokas)
4. Psychic pathways & centres (nadis & chakras)
5. Laws and duties in Society (dharma)
6. Sacramental rites (samskaras)
7. Consecration of forms of deities (murtis), shrines, houses, wells etc.,
8. Occult practices

9. Science

10. Astrology

The various sects of Tantra popular today are:

Sect Deity

1. Vaishnava Vishnu

2. Shaiva Shiva

3. Shakta Shakti

4. Saura Surya

5. Ganapatya Ganapati

(Some South Indian traditions add another sect to the above list- Kaumara. The deity is Kumara or Karthikeya or Skanda, the other son of Shiva and Parvati)

Each sect differs from the other in that its ultimate Godhead is different. Otherwise they are more or less the same in essence. The common feature is generally that all sects accept and worship Shakti; the Goddess. That is why Tantra is also commonly understood as Goddess worship. Each sect worships its ultimate Godhead in various aspects.

The science of Tantra, embracing the whole spectrum of life, covers the entire range in four great steps (padas): The first known as Jnana or Vidya pada dealing with the philosophical and theoretical frame work; The Yoga pada dealing with divine communion; The Kriya pada dealing with the rituals and lastly the Charya pada dealing with the various observances. Conventionally the Tantric texts are compiled in four books according to the padas.

- **JNANAPADA:** Deals with the basic philosophical principles and knowledge concerning the ultimate reality, explaining in great detail the creation of the universe, the different principles (tattvas), the archetypes, the evolution of man etc., stressing on the inherent divinity of man.
- **YOGAPADA:** Each soul is potentially divine. To awaken man to his inherent divinity and lead him to realize and participate in the inner harmonies of the mighty powers which govern his life is the main aim of this step. Various spiritual and esoteric practices including the eight limbed yoga which eventually lead to divine communion are covered here.

- **KRIYAPADA:** Man does not live all alone. He is apart of the collective and is constantly influenced by the environment. The individual and collective can join in a mutually enriching effort where the aspirant can best grow when buttressed by nourishment from a similar Sangha (company). The collective thought and feeling have a strong dynamic effect on the individual. Here the net result far exceeds the total the sum of the individual efforts added up, or in other words, is synergistic. In accordance with this great truth temples, community worship, the yagnya, the sacred pilgrimage places (punya kshetra) are all developed in the third step. The actual worship rituals involving mantras, mandalas, mudras etc., the rites of initiation, the role of the Guru and other such details are covered in this pada.
- **CHARYAPADA:** As the tantric adage goes, "munde monde matir bhinna" people are of varying temperaments, in various stages of growth and of unequal competence. It is here that tantra is unique, because it accepts all useful practices and insights encouraging diversity, innovation and individual freedom. The observances and rules pertaining to the various classes of people and the stages of life are dealt with in this section.

The tantras group all men and women under three broad categories based on their inherent samskaras as the animal (pasu), the heroic (vira) and the divine man (deva). This distinction, perhaps the *only* one that tantra makes between man and man, is based on a close study of ones samskaras , inner nature and competence so that each man may take up the path best suited to him and is *not decided by birth or status* . Classification may also follow the common concept of the dull (tamasic), the dynamic (rajasik) and the wise (sattvik). The three dispositions are arranged in a sequential order. The "animal" disposition is said to be the primary stage and is considered a necessary stage. Everyone however evolved, must start from here. Gradually one becomes "heroic" and eventually "divine".

Based on the nature of man tantra offers various paths.

1. **The right handed path** (dakshinachara) emphasizing meditational and spiritual disciplines and higher degree of purity in conduct. The "samaya" lineage meaning "according to the rule" is the path for the devotionally inclined people.
2. **The left handed path** (vamachara) employs the much talked of "panchamakara", the five M-s or the forbidden things.

Some texts deal with the concept of "seven - fold conduct (saptachara)".

1. Vedachara: rituals are based on the vedas.
2. Vaishnavachara: rituals are based on puranic description
3. Dakshinachara: worship of the Goddess employing vedic hymns
4. Vamachara: worship employing the five M-s

5. Saivachara: worship of Shiva using vedic hymns
6. Siddhantachara: rituals are performed in crematoria
7. Kaulachara: secret worship of Kali

Kaulachara: The kaulas are worshippers of Kali. The relation of Akula (Shiva) with Kali (Shakti) is Kaula. Kaula marga (path) is that which accepts and leads to the equipollence of Shiva and Shakti, not the static alone or the dynamic alone. There are two traditions based on whether the five M-s are used literally or symbolically. The five M-s are:

1. Maithuna, sexual union
2. Madya, wine (other intoxicants also)
3. Mamsa, meat
4. Matsya, fish
5. Mudra, parched grains

Literal Tradition : Here the five forbidden are actually used. Various sects like uttara kula, kapalika and digambara follow the literal tradition.

Symbolic Tradition : also called Purva Kaulas they take the five M-s only symbolically.

For instance, Maithuna (intercourse) is the union of Siva and Sakti, the cosmic male and female forces within the psyche. Symbolically, the five M-s are interpreted variously by various gurus (see the table at the end for more).

The literal tradition is for those who seek to do it by degrees. We have to first go through certain things before we can transcend them. **The easier way to transcend a desire is by turning it into a sacred action and offering it to God.** This path is only for the hero (vira) and not for other types-sometimes attachment to an idea can become a hindrance and in such cases, the Guru enjoins upon the disciple something to break the attachment to the idea. For example, the idea of purity is shattered by encouraging to take of the forbidden things, or even drinking unclean water etc., In the life of Sri Ramakrishna, Bhairava Brahmani, his Tantric Guru, asks him to eat a piece of flesh to shatter his idea of cleanliness and purity. Meditating in a burial ground may constantly remind one of the ever-changing, impermanent, ephemeral nature of life. Moreover, sex impulse being so strong, man can not suppress it or ignore it. It is part and parcel of life. In fact life starts with sex. Unlike other spiritual schools or religions, Tantra is unafraid of acknowledging man's sexuality. Tantra is not embarrassed of sexuality. Yet Tantra too seeks to transcend sex, but chooses more ingenious ways of doing this. Instead of suppressing our sexuality, an easier way would be to go through it, and then transcend sex.

A true tantric adept is like a clinician or a psychotherapist. Ideally a therapist works with whatever you bring to the clinic- anger, jealousy, grief, addictions, whatever. Tantra starts where you are, but takes you to transcendental heights eventually- from sex to Samadhi, also releasing deep internal energies, in this process. But unfortunately, there has been "a gross lamentable misuse by the ignorant and abuse by the pervert leading to the downfall and degradation" of the adherent (practitioner) and the practice. It is only to harness the energies of sex, anger and other emotions and transform them at a deeper level of mind that these seemingly forbidden practices are included. But it is left for a very few, the heroic (vira) who have complete control over their senses, to tread the dangerous path, while for the majority it is unsuitable, especially under inefficient guidance. Tantra does not necessarily require such practices though they may be occasionally useful for a few. It is only apt that this article ends with the following quote from the *Kularnava tantra* .

"Beguiled by false knowledge as propagated, certain persons, deprived of the guru-shishya tradition, imagine the nature of the Kuladharma according to their own intellect. If merely by drinking wine, men were to attain fulfillment, all addicted to liquor would reach perfection. If mere partaking of flesh were to lead to the high state, all the carnivores in the world would become eligible to immense merit. If liberation were to be ensured by sexual intercourse with a shakti, all creatures wo become liberated by female companionship." (Kularnava Tantra, II, 116-118).

Forbidden	Literal	Substitutional	Symbolic meaning
Thing 1. Madya	Meaning Wine	(can be substituted by) Coconut water	Intoxicating spiritual bliss
2. Mamsa	Meat	Garlic, Ginger,Wheat, Beans, Sesamum	Consignment of all things to <i>mam</i> , Me
3. Matsya	Fish	Red raddish, Brinjal	Identification "oneself" -sense of mine-ness <i>mat-sya</i> , as a result of which pleasure

and pain arise

4. Mudra	i. Parched cereal Rice, paddy,	Giving up evil association
	ii. Gesture	Certain Gestures which aid in forming patterns of Psychic energy
5. Maithuna	Sexual union	Flowers offered with appropriate gesture of union Union of Kundalini Shakti with Shiva in crown chakra or Sahasrara

Mahakala- the Great God of Time

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

"Where are all the riches of kings? Where are all the worlds created by Brahma? All these are destroyed and dissolved (in the eternal process of Time). How can I have faith in all these things?

Millions of Indras have been swallowed up like bubbles in the ocean of eternity. Wise men will laugh at me for my having pinned my faith to earthly life.

Millions of Brahmans have passed away. Several cycles of creation have elapsed. Kings of the earth have disappeared like particles of dust. Where is the confidence then, in my life and its stability?"

(I.22-24, JANAKA GITA, Upashanti Prakarana, YOGA VASISHTA)

Perhaps of all the forms of gods worshipped, the most mysterious and difficult to comprehend is Mahakala- the great Lord of Time. Mahakala literally means 'Great Time'. Every male god in tantra, has a female counterpart and vice versa. Mahakala is the male counterpart of Mahakali, the Mistress of Time. In life, there is nothing that does not change. The only thing that doesn't change is this principle of change. Time is the great force of change that drives all things to be born, to grow, to transform and eventually to

die. But beyond our limited vision of manifest time, is eternity, which is the unmanifest time. When we realize the ultimate truth of time itself, we merge into that eternity.

'Kala' literally means 'time' and is the matrix of the unborn. Mahakali is the mother who destroys her own children, returning to them their wholeness and unity with herself. She withdraws the countless universes into her womb like waves that recede back to the ocean. Time is death, for change implies death- the death of the past. Mahakala is both creation and destruction for, to create he must first destroy. He destroys only to transform. He transforms Avidya into Vidya. He is the Lord of Time who weaves the warp and woof of existence.

The worship of an abstract concept like '**Time**' is a unique aspect of the Hindu way of life influenced by the pre-historic *Tantric* tradition, which considered Shiva as the supreme Godhead. The idea that the guru (teacher) and god are the same is quite common to such ancient schools. And who is a better teacher than Time? Many civilizations have risen and fallen. Very many generations have come and gone. Great kings have merged with the dust of the earth. Even the planets, the sun, the stars, this very universe, have all gone through many cycles of destruction and creation. Millions of mighty beings have been swallowed up like bubbles in the ocean of eternity. Several cycles of creation have elapsed. Time teaches the greatest lessons. It teaches us to accept change as the only unchanging principle in this universe that is in a constant state of flux. From the depths of the prehistoric human psyche, emerge the nebulous beginnings of the image of **Mahakala**, the great Lord of Time. The image of Mahakala grew slowly and developed spontaneously as man moved through and lived in the various bygone eras. It was not thrust on man, but manifested naturally as any other archetypal image would. Here it may not be out of context if I deviate, to acquaint the average reader with the term 'archetype'.

The word 'archetype' was first used by the famous psychologist Carl Gustav Jung in 1919. What are archetypes? Jung posited that in addition to the *personal unconscious* , there is also the *collective unconscious* . The collective unconscious is formed of two components- the *instincts* and the *archetypes* . He had discovered that the delusions of the insane seemed to call on a collective fund of archaic images and symbols.

While instincts are impulses, which carry out actions from necessity and have a biological quality (for instance the homing instinct in birds), the archetypes are different. Archetypes are innate, unconscious modes of understanding which regulate our perception itself. These inborn forms of 'intuition' are the necessary determinants of all psychic phenomena. At times it seems as if Jung doesn't make a distinction between the instincts and the archetypes, while at many places he differentiates them.

Jung also believed that many of our more complex social behaviors and/or rituals are also inborn, universal, archetypal behaviors. Then the intricate mating games and courtship rituals that we humans (as well as other animals) engage in, are also considered to be universal, archetypal behaviors. Going beyond the basic instincts, beyond the social, "instincts" (rituals or behaviors), Jung saw even the human desire for spirituality - our need for experiencing "the Eternal" (God) - as being an inborn archetypal behavior.

"If therefore, we speak of "God" as an "archetype," we are saying nothing about His real nature - but are rather letting it be known that "God" already has a place in that part of our psyche which is pre-existent to consciousness. And that therefore God cannot be considered merely an invention of consciousness. We neither make Him more remote nor eliminate Him, but bring Him closer to the possibility of being experienced.... The psyche of the infant in its preconscious state is *anything but* (italics mine) a tabula rasa (blank sheet); it is already preformed in a recognizably individual way, and is moreover equipped with all specifically human instincts, as well as with the a priori foundations of the higher functions... And if, by employing the concept of "archetype," we attempt to define a little more closely the point at which the "god" grips us, we have not abolished anything, only approached closer to the source of life." (Excerpt from *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*) In other words Jung tells us that we are born with the desire to know and experience God!

Archetypal images, as universal patterns or motifs, which come from the collective unconscious, are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales. "An archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors. If such a content should speak of the sun and identify with it the lion, the king, the hoard of gold guarded by the dragon, or the power that makes for the life and health of man, it is neither the one thing nor the other, but the unknown third thing that finds more or less adequate expression in all these similes, yet-to the perpetual vexation of the intellect-remains unknown and not to be fitted into a formula." ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype," CW 9i, par. 267) On a personal level, archetypal motifs are patterns of thought or behavior that are common to humanity at all times and in all places.

The archetypes have no material existence and reveal themselves only as 'images'. Jung distinguished per se the 'archetype' from the 'archetypal image'. *The existence of the archetype itself can only be inferred, since it is by definition, unconscious. But the archetypal image protrudes into consciousness and is the way we perceive the archetype for ourselves. Thus archetypes are primordial ideas, common to all mankind, and express only through the archetypal images. Archetypes are charged with emotion and function autonomously from the unconscious. They are numinous, electrically charged with a sense of the sacred.* Throughout the centuries, the various religions and their sacred writings have identified archetypes (and visionary, numinous archetypal experiences) using a wide array of terminology for them. Within Hinduism, Tantra had the most evolved and universal system of symbols, images, and other such tools of transformation. Mahakala (Great 'God of Time'), KalaChakra (Wheel of Time), KalaSarpa (Serpent of Time) etc are among some such images that emerge from the unconscious, images that are of great value in understanding how the ancients evolved certain astronomical concepts.

The conception of Time was common to both the Tantric and Vedic traditions (modern Hinduism is a blend of both). Both the *Tantric* as well as *Vedic* traditions conceived Time as a mathematical abstraction of the ecliptic. "The sidereal zodiac provides convincing astronomical explanation for many of the Hindu customs and practices. The origin of the Phallus & Serpent worship can be traced to the sidereal zodiac . by incorporating the

basic rationales. Prevalence of these customs in all the ancient civilizations like Egypt & Sumeria suggests Indian influence and the existence of *Tantric* cult in these places. The remnants of this ancient tradition are still visible in Kerala." (Pre-Historic Indian Astronomy, K.Chandra Hari).

Serpent worship was common in many ancient cultures, including the tantric. In fact *Shiva* is adorned by a serpent coiled around his neck. The serpent is symbolic of the *Kundalini* (also referred to as the 'Serpent Power'). Even *Rahu* (North node) and *Ketu* (South node) are depicted as 'serpent bodied' and 'serpent headed' respectively, in ancient myth. While each of the seven *grahas* (Sun to Saturn) corresponds to the seven colors of the spectrum, *Rahu* and *Ketu* represent the outer invisible ultraviolet and infrared regions respectively. The importance attached to the nodes in ancient astronomy becomes evident from the fact that the nodes are equated to the "Serpent of Time". More of this in another appropriate article. Let me first get back to the image of *Mahakala*.

'Mahakala has four arms and three eyes, and is of the brilliance of 10,000,000 black fires of dissolution, dwells in the midst of eight cremation grounds, is adorned with eight skulls, seated on five corpses, holding a trident, a damaru, a sword and a kharpa in his hands. With a beautiful body adorned with ashes from the cremation ground, on various corpses he dallies with Kali, fondling her and making love with her and fiercely kissing her, surrounded by numerous loudly shrieking vultures and jackals, adorned with a heap of braided hair, in a deserted place. Kalika, his Mistress, is of the form of the void, ornamented with skulls, with a sweet and charming face, in the midst of that five-fold love-yantra. Her yoni is the wheel of time (kalachakra)', states the *Shaktisamgama Tantra*. The description varies slightly in other texts. The depiction in all the texts has something in common- it is intensely primordial and very rich in symbolism.

Mahakala's outwardly frightening form is a highly symbolic one. "To the ignorant the idea of sacrificing the ego is fearful. But only when the ego is killed and the conflicting, doubting thoughts of the mind are cut asunder, can we be delivered of the attachments of ignorance and sorrow. The death of the ego, the death of the attachment to our material natures, the death of the mind, all these bring the new into the being. For, in the death of these aspects of our false self, lies our spiritual rebirth". Mahakala is the life that exists in death. To die daily to the past, ever aware of the present, here and now, is to be one with Mahakala, the Great Time. The past has to be buried. The future is uncertain. The only reality is here and now. This is the message of Mahakala. The cessation of desire, attachment fear and ego are all due to His grace.

Every aspirant in his spiritual journey has to meet Mahakala, at least symbolically. One has to learn to transcend 'Death' or rather the fear of 'Death', the fear of the unknown and the resistance to change, if one wants to grow. Mahakala symbolizes all this. To the initiate, he is both terrifying and lovable. He is both birth and death, for death leads to a new birth. In short, Mahakala has within him, both aspects of duality, the pairs of opposites- birth and death, happiness and misery, success and failure, ignorance and knowledge, deities and demons, good and bad, vice and virtue, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, all merge into the dense darkness of Mahakala. Man goes through life after life,

passing through very many wombs, experiencing scores of fathers, mothers, lovers, enemies and friends. Caught in this cycle, he gets pulled into the whirlpool of karma, in this enigma of time, getting crushed under the wheel of time (Kalachakra), in this sport of Mahakala. Those who comprehend Mahakala's nature, his glory and his sport, transcend Time and are ultimately liberated.

Various accounts distinguish between Rudra, Bhairava, Kala and Mahakala, though all these are various forms of Shiva. Rudra is the vedic version, the destructive aspect while Time is personified as Kala. Another important aspect of Shiva-Rudra is Mrityunjaya, who personifies the victory over untimely death. According to one account, Rudra met Kala, the god of Time, and recognized in him his own self. But Kala has only four faces and lacks the fifth face of Shiva, that which is beyond time, as personified in his transcendent aspect of Ishana. Thus Shiva is the personification of time as Kala, and beyond the limitations of time as Mahakala. The mysteries of day and night, life and death, and the cycle of seasons, are all elaborations of the sport of Mahakala. The distinction between Kala and Mahakala, between manifest and unmanifest time, is a great philosophical concept. Time and change are rhythmic and this rhythmic nature is seen as a great dance, and Shiva is depicted as Nataraja, the Lord of dancers, the Cosmic dancer.

The Tantric path allows the initiate to choose a deity, from the innumerable forms. These forms are all 'archetypes' deeply embedded in our psyche. Of such forms, there are five principal forms. Shiva, Shakti, Surya, Vishnu and Ganesha are the five main forms, and have corresponding Tantric sects. Shakti is shared in some sense by both the Shaivite (those who like to see the Supreme Godhead as Shiva) and Vaishnavite (those who like to see the Supreme Godhead as Vishnu) paths. At one stage, the grahas (loosely translated as planets) also were glorified and raised to the status of Gods. Sun (Surya), the giver of life and vitality, was worshipped as Suryanarayana, a form of Vishnu himself, while Sun's son Saturn (Shani), was equated to Shiva Mahakala, since he shares some attributes of Mahakala. Thus the planetary archetype of Saturn is a manifestation of Mahakala. Yet Mahakala is higher than Saturn, whilst still holding the same spiritual lessons. The psycho-spiritual message of Saturn is very much the same as that of Mahakala - *change, growth and transformation- a threefold lesson learnt through the hard experiences of Time*. Ultimately the malefics too are benefic, benefic at least in their purpose. Their work is the grace of Mahakala. Everything dissolves into Him. Glories to Mahakala!

Sacred Myth - A Therapeutic Tool

Reading Sacred Myth as a Remedial Measure for Planetary Afflictions

----- © Dr. Satya Prakash Choudhary

Note: The following article is taken from the introductory chapters to the author's unpublished book 'Planetary Myth - A Therapeutic Tool'. In this book the author draws from many ancient Indian sources and sometimes compares other myths like those of the Greeks or Romans, where relevant.

Remedial Measures for planetary afflictions

Vedic astrology is well known for the remedial measures that it prescribes for various planetary afflictions and periods. From charity to chanting, a variety of techniques are used. Some prescribe chanting of sacred syllables and long mantras, while others prescribe wearing carefully chosen gemstones. Yet others recommend donating particular articles to appease particular planets. But the simplest of all remedies, is devout reading of particular myths or stories. Meditating on these myths is a very old custom in India . The myths are generally interesting and can be read by anyone. Remedies like chanting, quite often have dos and don'ts attached. One needs to be initiated by an adept for most mantras. The right accent and intonation is often very important.

And so far as the gemstones are concerned, picking the most suitable gem is in itself a not too easy job. Even if one has successfully identified the appropriate gemstone, it is hard to get the right quality stone. Flawed stones can channelise negative energies of the planet. Rituals like the Yagnas are quite often costly and one could face practical difficulties. Talismans and other such remedies give scope for exploitation. It is quite common to come across unscrupulous astrologers who prescribe costly remedies just to fill their pockets. Some astrologers are more eager to prescribe remedies than to predict. I could go on pointing out the difficulties one encounters, in the process of trying to appease the planets. What is the way out?

Three modes of remedying- Sattvic, Rajasic and Tamasic

First let us see how these remedies work. Certain remedies try to neutralize certain previous karmas. Some try to increase the balance of good karmas. Based on their approach and spirit, remedies can be classified into three categories- tamasic, rajasic and sattvic. Most remedies of the 'Lal Kitab' are either tamasic or rajasic. Tamasic remedies give temporary relief only. Carrying or wearing a particular thing on one's body, or throwing coins in flowing water or not parting with articles signified by a planet during its period, are all, of this kind. They don't really either neutralize the unwholesome karmas of the past or help acquire merit. They could at the most give only temporary relief. Certain other karmas like feeding birds, animals and persons signified by the planet aim at neutralizing the previous unwholesome karmas, or at increasing the merit (punya). Such remedies are rajasic. They are much better than the tamasic ones. Yet they do not work at the causal level.

The Tantric path offers a variety of remedies, some sattvic, some rajasic and some tamasic. There are some who employ the knowledge of Tantra for self-centered activities, activities that at times are not in others' interests. Energy is in itself, neither good nor evil. It is the way we employ it that makes the difference. Though one can employ the great forces of nature for evil purposes or to harm others, in the long run, the effect of their "negative karmas" will catch up with them. None can escape the law of karma. Employing the same cosmic forces for peaceful and beneficial purposes is allowed. At the same time, it should be remembered that the use of yantra, mantra and tantra for occult purposes, for the fulfillment of worldly desires is only peripheral and the actual

purpose of Tantra- to expand one's awareness till it liberates oneself taking one back to the Cosmic source- should not be lost sight of.

The sattvic remedies are the ones that work at the causal level. They cut across the root of karmas, by bringing a change of consciousness. What is the point in feeding crows, when one remains arrogant and petty minded? Ultimately all sattvic remedies aim at a transformation of consciousness. For it is here that the key to 'Wholeness' lies. Any significant change has to come from within. And for such change to be long lasting, it needs to be from the source. So only remedies that work on the roots of karma, can give more lasting effects. Such sattvic remedies include genuine sadhana (spiritual work) and a selfless or at least 'detached' attitude. But spiritual work done with a motive becomes rajasic. Thus chanting a sattvic mantra for the fulfillment of a desire, can make the remedy a rajasic one. Nevertheless it still elevates one's mind. Thus chanting certain sattvic mantras, reading or listening to the sacred myths, serving others and charity, are all sattvic remedies, depending on one's attitude.

While chanting some mantras needs a certain amount of spiritual discipline, the degree of discipline required while reading the stories, is far less, thus making it a far more Universal remedy, a remedy that can be adopted by one and all, a remedy that is very simple and has no side effects. The safest remedies are reading the sacred stories, and helping others. When done sincerely with the right preparation, chanting mantras too is good. But a wrong approach may at times bring unnecessary problems. Chanting the names of the Supreme God is another safe and easy remedy. Meditation is also quite beneficial. But most people find meditation either boring or difficult. It is here that the stories are very useful.

The status of Sacred Myth in remedial Measures

While reading the stories, one can easily concentrate, thus making it easier to indirectly meditate on the same energy. Reading the stories of the planets and the respective deities is another form of meditating on them, thus opening our minds to their beneficial influences. The more we meditate on the various significations and lessons that a planet imparts, the more we get attuned to the positive workings of the planets. Gradually we imbibe the 'spirit' of the planet as its relevance and significance 'sinks' into our psyche. We become channels for the benefic planetary energies to flow through. But for this to happen, we should become hollow, like a bamboo. A solid stick cannot become a flute. Only a hollow bamboo can become a flute, like the flute in the hands of Krishna . Then the cosmic energies flow through us; eternal music comes through us.

Just as "Darkness is not dispensed just by mentioning the word 'lamp' " (Kularnava Tantra), however well said, words are insufficient. It is the actual experience that can give self-realization. This is what a devout reading of the sacred myth does. The external worship is much more than mere obeisance to the deity. It is a psychological experiment of systematically attuning the body and the psychic forces for a gradual unfolding. It is a process of 'centering' one's psychic energies and ultimately the 'unification' with the cosmos. The degree to which the stories help us, depends on our faith too. Done with an

attitude of faith, love and sincerity, the practice of devout reading unites theory and practice to help in the expansion of consciousness.

That which never happened but always is

At this point, it is helpful to know more about myth in general. Myth in its popular sense, means something widely believed and contrary to fact. But it is not so. As Salustius said, "Myths are things which never happened **but always are**". In its earlier sense, a myth is more like a **metaphor of some subtlety on a subject difficult to describe in any other way**. A myth is "an involuntary collective statement based on an unconscious psychic experience". According to Carl Jung, "The primitive mentality does not **invent** myths, it **experiences** them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche . . . Many of these unconscious processes may be indirectly occasioned by consciousness, but never by conscious choice. Others appear to arise spontaneously, that is to say, from no discernible or demonstrable conscious cause. ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype," ibid. par. 261.)

Living Wisdom

Ancient Indian tradition too holds that its mythology is not invented and that it is based on **original revelations**. And that it is timeless. It is **living wisdom**. Each time the stories are retold, they become alive again. Such stories are experienced, rather relived. Not in the external world, but in an internal world, within the psyche. But the listener has to be open and receptive. The stories are charged with energy, energy that can be transmitted to whoever is open enough to receive it. But myth cannot speak to a listener whose mind is barred by over-intellectualization. If one starts intellectualizing any experience, the whole charm is lost. If one starts intellectualizing love, it boils down to chemistry, depriving oneself of the wonderful experience called love. So too with Myth. In order to experience the living wisdom, for it to work on your consciousness, you have to stop intellectualizing the stories. You should let them penetrate your consciousness, so that you may touch their source- the preconscious psyche. In doing so, you will touch your own source- where you are one with the Cosmic.

Myth can be therapeutic too, as modern psychology affirms. But that is not the end of it. The images and symbols used by mythology are not randomly selected, but very precise since they evolved naturally. Mythology makes use of precise, vital images and symbols to awaken the lost memory of our true nature, and in the process, helps the individual to recover the lost unity and assume the nature of the original Cosmic consciousness.

Sacred myth- A veritable labyrinth of symbols and images

In these myths we come a long way, passing though a veritable labyrinth as it were, of symbols, images, gods and goddesses. At times, the average reader may wonder what actually these symbols and deities are. Are they just man-made conceptions to facilitate comprehension? Are the deities just various psychological forces? Are they just transformers of our psychic Energy? Are they just Cosmic forces? Are they just universal

archetypes repeating constantly in the midst of men at all times? To answer that they are any of these would be wrong for they are all these and much more. After reading the stories, if anyone mistakes them to be an intellectual game, there would be nothing more farther from truth. Sadhana is not an intellectual game, but a spiritual experience, which helps us to discover our Cosmic roots, an exercise which helps us to discover our own self, the awareness of which makes life joyful, radiant and infinitely meaningful.

Such symbols and deities are not "manufactured", but discovered through primal inner sources. It is true that the symbols are born from a universal human compulsion and embody "timeless" universal principles. True Shakti is power and energy. Yet to render Shakti merely as power would be erroneous. She is not just power or energy as is understood commonly. She is the power of Shiva (Consciousness). She is the power of everything, the power of peace, the power of meditation, the power of silence, the power of action, a power that permeates everything from within. She is the power of wisdom, devotion, meditation and action. She is Svashakti, one's own power. She is the power of transformation. And Sadhana awakens the dormant power within us. Shakti is the creative mystery, which displays itself in various ways. To the physicist, she is the inherent active force of matter; to the psychologist, she is the force of mind (the psychological force); to the mystic she is the force behind all that IS.

All the deities we worship are an embodiment of various attributes that reveal the supreme principle (ultimate reality) in one way or the other. Everything is born from cosmic consciousness. When we do not forget this fundamental truth, there would be no difficulty in understanding that the Supreme consciousness, the Ultimate Reality which is beyond all forms and descriptions can assume the forms of the various deities, in response to the wishes of the devotees who supplicate it. Countless mystics and seers have realized, seen and experienced these forms. These deities are not just symbols but real. They are as real as you and me, but on a different level.

Nobody can deny the power of the mind. It is the power of the mind that underlies all man made creations. The imagination, dreams and thoughts of man slowly become a reality. Every scientific discovery and invention is proof of this. Seeing the birds flying, man, by the power of his mind has invented the aeroplane. Now imagine the power of millions of people meditating on a form of the Supreme, as a chosen deity! The power of their minds is enough to really make the Supreme Principle manifest itself in the form that they meditate on. New archetypes emerge at times from the collective mind. The older archetypes do not die, but continue to live, albeit through the new ones, and keep surfacing again. Thus old ones merge into new archetypes. This process of integration goes on as the collective mind lives its role in Nature's evolution. Thus the Vedic Rudra is integrated into the Tantric Shiva, who is adored in different forms, each form being a facet of the same Shiva.

You should also remember, the famous Rig vedic affirmation, '*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*'. 'Truth is one; sages call it by various names' (1.164.46) sums up the Vedic approach to the various names of Truth or Reality. Though the various deities appear to

be different and independent, they are actually facets of the same Cosmic Consciousness, Brahman, or the Supreme.

Archetypes and archetypal images as Universal motifs

From the depths of the prehistoric human psyche, emerge the nebulous beginnings of the images of the gods and demons. Such images grew slowly and developed spontaneously as man moved through and lived in the various bygone eras. They were not thrust on man, but manifested naturally as any other archetypal image would. Here it may not be out of context if I deviate, to acquaint the average reader with the term 'archetype'.

The word 'archetype' was first used by the famous sage and psychologist Carl Gustav Jung in 1919. Today it is not an uncommon word. But how many of us have understood Jung's usage of the word? I have often come across people using the word differently. What are archetypes? Jung posited that in addition to the personal unconscious, there is also the **collective unconscious**. The collective unconscious is formed of two components- the **instincts and the archetypes**. He had discovered that the delusions of the insane seemed to call on a collective fund of archaic images and symbols.

While instincts are impulses, which carry out actions from necessity and have a biological quality (for instance the homing instinct in birds), the archetypes are different. Archetypes are innate, unconscious modes of understanding which regulate our perception itself. These inborn forms of 'intuition' are the necessary determinants of all psychic phenomena. At times it seems as if Jung doesn't make a distinction between the instincts and the archetypes, while at many places he differentiates them.

Jung also believed that many of our more complex social behaviors and/or rituals are also inborn, universal, archetypal behaviors. Then the intricate mating games and courtship rituals that we humans (as well as other animals) engage in, are also considered to be universal, archetypal behaviors. Going beyond the basic instincts, beyond the social, "instincts" (rituals or behaviors), Jung saw even the human desire for spirituality - our need for experiencing "the Eternal" (God) - as being an inborn archetypal behavior.

"If therefore, we speak of "God" as an "archetype," we are saying nothing about His real nature - but are rather letting it be known that "God" already has a place in that part of our psyche which is pre-existent to consciousness. And that therefore God cannot be considered merely an invention of consciousness. We neither make Him more remote nor eliminate Him, but bring Him closer to the possibility of being experienced.... The psyche of the infant in its preconscious state is **anything but** (italics mine) a tabula rasa (blank sheet); it is already preformed in a recognizably individual way, and is moreover equipped with all specifically human instincts, as well as with the a priori foundations of the higher functions... And if, by employing the concept of "archetype," we attempt to define a little more closely the point at which the "god" grips us, we have not abolished anything, only approached closer to the source of life." (Short Excerpt from *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*) Thus Jung tells us that we are born with the desire to know and experience God!

Archetypal images, as universal patterns or motifs, which come from the collective unconscious, are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends and fairy tales. "An archetypal content expresses itself, first and foremost, in metaphors. If such a content should speak of the sun and identify with it the lion, the king, the hoard of gold guarded by the dragon, or the power that makes for the life and health of man, it is neither the one thing nor the other, but the unknown third thing that finds more or less adequate expression in all these similes, yet-to the perpetual vexation of the intellect-remains unknown and not to be fitted into a formula." ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype," CW 9i, par. 267) On a personal level, archetypal motifs are patterns of thought or behavior that are common to humanity at all times and in all places.

The archetypes have no material existence and reveal themselves only as '**images**'. Jung distinguished per se the 'archetype' from the 'archetypal image'. *The existence of the archetype itself can only be inferred, since it is by definition, unconscious. But the archetypal image protrudes into consciousness and is the way we perceive the archetype for ourselves. Thus archetypes are primordial ideas, common to all mankind, and express only through the archetypal images. Archetypes are charged with emotion and function autonomously from the unconscious. They are numinous, electrically charged with a sense of the sacred.*

Hinduism- A living system of universal symbols and images

Throughout the centuries, various religions and their sacred writings have identified archetypes (and visionary, numinous archetypal experiences) using a wide array of terminology for them. While it is true that other ancient cultures across the globe, too had their own system of symbols, Hinduism, is probably the only one that has **survived and been preserved** well over the centuries. It has the most evolved, universal and **living** system of symbols, images, and other such tools of transformation. Such archetypes and myths belong to none, they are universal. Very little of ancient cultures like the Babylonian is known today. The fragments are hard to follow. The essence of the Greek myths had been lost and they have degenerated from living wisdom to allegories and fables. It is here that the world can benefit from the living wisdom of ancient India .

Sacred Myth- A therapeutic tool

Meditating on the sacred myths can help the seeker in synthesizing both the conscious and unconscious contents of the mind. Thus it is therapeutic and takes the individual closer to 'Wholeness'. Jung's own words best describe this idea. "The archetype is pure, inviolated nature, and it is nature that causes man to utter words and perform actions whose meaning is unconscious to him, so unconscious that he no longer gives it a thought. A later, more conscious humanity, faced with such meaningful things whose meaning none could declare, hit upon the idea that these must be the last vestiges of a Golden age, where there were men who knew all things and taught wisdom to the nations. In the degenerate days that followed, these teachings were forgotten and were now only repeated as mindless mechanical gestures. In view of the findings of modern psychology it cannot be doubted that there are preconscious archetypes which were never

conscious and can be established only indirectly through their effects upon the conscious contents. The achievement of a synthesis of conscious and unconscious contents, and the conscious realization of the archetype's effects upon the conscious contents, represents the climax of a concentrated spiritual and psychic effort, in so far as this is undertaken consciously and of set purpose." (412-413, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche, The Collected Works, Volume 8)

Myth as a therapeutic tool, exorcises the practitioner's (sadhak) mind and liberates him from his various mental complexes. The Cosmic process is expressed in images. The various psychic or psychological forces are picturised as deities, male or female, beautiful or terrifying. Some myths require the recognition and transformation of negative forces within oneself. Powerful as they are, these negative forces (demonic forces) are constantly at work within and cannot be suppressed. They need to be accepted and given a different orientation, a 180 degree turn. Fully envisioning the darker side of one's personality, these dark forces are transformed into illuminating forces. Most of the myths which narrate the struggle between the Demons (asuras) and Gods (Devas) symbolize the inner conflict between the positive and negative forces within us. Eventually in all myths, the Gods triumph, but not without the intervention of the Supreme Lord.

It is divine grace, prayer and meditation that help us to overcome the demonic forces of ignorance, egoism and lust. The demons as well as the Gods are Universal Archetypes, symbols which when used with background knowledge of mythology, bring to life the various psychic forces. These are then, worked out in a suitable environment.

Sacred Myth in the traditional context

The Puranas declare that one derives immense benefits by reading the sacred stories. For instance, the Markandeya purana affirms that all sins will be forgiven by listening to the stories of that Purana. It also promises a long life and fulfillment of one's objectives. Further it is stated that reading the eighteen puranas, one attains the merits (punya) one achieves by performing an ashwamedha sacrifice. The Agni purana too declares that great benefits are derived from merely hearing the puranas recited, that if one arranges for a traditional recitation of the Puranas, one lives long and attains heaven. Likewise other puranas too affirm that great benefits can be derived from a devout reading of the sacred stories.

The eighteen puranas are held so sacred each of them is associated with one part of Vishnu's body, as the Padma purana affirms. The same text promises that hearing a single verse of the sacred text will destroy the sins committed in the space of one day. One gets the merit of donating a thousand cows to a spiritual person, just by listening to the recital of one chapter of the text. It also affirms that listening to a recital of the entire text can fetch the same merit as the performance of an ashwamedha yagna, and that listening to the recital of the text is far better than performing great austerities or donating alms in terms of the rewards obtained.

Most people find it cumbersome to go through the entire body of sacred myths. Yet others do not have sufficient time to do so. Since the texts affirm unanimously that reading even a single story or even a verse is highly meritorious, it would be definitely very beneficial to read some stories at least. But how does one select the stories? There should be some criteria.

In vedic astrology, there is a unique scheme of the dashas (or planetary periods) which help an astrologer in timing the predictions. The astrological texts also recommend certain remedial measures for each of the planets during their periods. Based on these criteria, I have compiled all the stories of the planets first.

In Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra, Maharshi Parasara reveals the following. "The Unborn lord has many incarnations. He has incarnated as the nine grahas to bestow on the living beings the results due to their Karmas. He assumed the auspicious form of grahas to annihilate the evil forces and sustain the divine. From Sun the incarnation of Rama, from Moon that of Krishna , from Mars that of Narasimha, from Mercury that of Buddha, from Jupiter that of Vamana, from Venus that of Parashurama, from Saturn that of Kurma (Tortoise), from Rahu (north node) that of Varaha (boar), and from Ketu (south node) that of Meena (Fish) occurred. All other incarnations than these also are through the grahas. The beings with a predominant Cosmic Consciousness are divine. The beings with more individual consciousness are mortal beings. The high degree of Cosmic Consciousness from the grahas did incarnate as Rama, Krishna , etc. After completing the mission, the divine element from the grahas again merges in the respective grahas. The individual portions from the grahas take births as human beings and live their lives according to their Karmas and again merge in the grahas. And at the time of the Great Destruction, the grahas as well merge in Lord Vishnu."

Following Parasara, I decided to include the stories of the incarnations of Vishnu for the nine planets respectively. Each of Vishnu's incarnations is said to have taken place through a particular graha (planet). Since there is a correspondence between the planets and various deities, reading the stories of the deity corresponding to the planet, is also an effective remedy. Following certain authorities like the *Uma Samhita* , I decided to include particular cantos from the Ramayana.

Tradition holds that devout reading of certain cantos of the Ramayana is an effective remedy for particular planetary afflictions. So I have written a section on selected cantos of the Ramayana. I have followed only Valmiki's Ramayana, remaining faithful to the original so as to retain the original flavour. Thus this book has a collection of sacred myths from many ancient Indian sources. And these stories have been categorized according to the planets. Thus if you are running the dasha or antardasha of Saturn, you can read either the myths related to Saturn, or the story of Vishnu's incarnation as the turtle, or the specific canto from the Ramayana, or you can read all of them if you have the time and enjoy doing so. Perhaps you might want to light a lamp, burn incense, and then settle down to meditate on the myths, having created a suitable environment. You could read the myths related to a planet on its weekday regularly, or even daily for a period of forty days or for the entire period or subperiod of the planet. Perhaps you may

just want to read the myths whenever you feel like. But as you continue doing so, gradually the myth will start working on you. The various images will become alive and eventually be integrated, taking you closer to your true Self.

In this book, I have narrated stories of the planets or their deities mostly. Most of the stories are extracted from the Puranas. Here let me tell you about the puranas in general. It is widely believed that the puranas were compiled by the sage Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa. The puranas themselves declare a slightly different version. In each age (Mahayuga), in every Dwapara yuga, Vishnu in his form of Veda Vyasa, incarnates to uphold the Vedas. He divides the Vedas and helps to preserve them for the coming kali yuga. Let me acquaint you with the time cycles as envisioned by the ancients.

One kalpa is one day for Brahma. A day of Brahma is followed by the night of Brahma. At the end of one Kalpa, the Universe is dissolved. And 14 manvantaras constitute a cycle or Kalpa. A manvantara is an era and is ruled by a Manu. Currently we are in Vaivasvata manvantara. 71 Mahayugas constitute one manvantara. One Mahayuga comprises of 12000 years of the gods or, equivalently, 4,320,000 human years. In other words a Veda Vyasa is born every 4.3 million years! In this Manvantara, twenty-eight mahayugas have elapsed. Thus twenty-eight Veda Vyosas have incarnated so far.

The Vyasa for this Dwapara yuga is Krishna Dwaipayana, the son of the illustrious sage Parasara, who is considered the father of Vedic astrology, for it is held widely that it was he who composed the famous astrological text 'Brihat Parasara Hora Sastra'. When Krishna Dwaipayayana Vedavyasa sought to divide the four Vedas, he first gathered around him four learned disciples and taught them the four Vedas (Vishnu Purana). He later taught the puranas which are known as the fifth veda, to his disciple Romaharshana (The Bhagavata Purana). In the beginning, there was only one Purana and sage Vyasa divided it into eighteen. (Matsya Purana). The original source for all puranas is the Purana Samhita, which Vyasa taught to Romaharshana. Romaharshana had six disciples to whom he taught it. Sumati, Agnivarchah, Mitrayu, Shamshapayana, Akritavrana and Savarni are the names of these disciples. Each of these disciples composed a purana based on the Purana Samhita. (Vishnu Purana).

As the Linga Purana says, it could be possible that sage Parasara taught the Purana Samhita to his son Vyasa who in turn taught it to Romaharshana. Thus though all the puranas are attributed to Vyasadeva himself, the texts of the eighteen puranas were written by various disciples. This has resulted in some differences between the texts. Moreover, most of these texts that we see today in their present and final form, were rewritten with many interpolations between 300AD and 1000AD. But earlier versions of the puranas were in existence even during 500BC. This also explains the differences and contradictions between the puranas.

Thus to take everything in the puranas as final or authentic in a historical or factual sense may be erroneous. At the same time, this should not deter us from benefiting from the living wisdom. Moreover there are many gems, facts and spiritual truths in these myths in spite of the interpolations. Most of the interpolations are obvious to a discerning reader in

their subject and style. Some accounts are amplified beyond their primary scope. At times efforts to glorify or elevate particular schools of thought or deities are made in these interpolations. But it is possible to still feel the common spirit and the original sense of the myth.

Each text highlights certain things and has its own uniqueness while all the texts have some similarities. Some stories are differently narrated in different puranas. I have tried to capture the spirit of the story while remaining faithful to the original. Wherever two puranas differed I followed the more plausible version. I also preferred the most common version. At the same time, if a purana could add to the richness of detail to the central story selected from another, I borrowed such additional details. Rarely I took the liberty of adding a comment or two where it seemed relevant. But such comments too are based on a knowledge of other sacred texts considered to be an integral part of the Vedic literature. The agamas, jyotisa or astrology, the itihasas, the puranas, all support each other.

Reading this book will give you the benefits of reading selected portions of the puranas. Since it is declared by the puranas themselves that reading even a single story or even a verse is highly meritorious, I am convinced that a devout reading of the sacred myths in this book will prove beneficial spiritually and astrologically too. Since they have been categorized under the corresponding planet's section, one may even read the myths systematically according to the current planetary period or sub-period. Or you may just meditate on these stories for their spiritually therapeutic value.

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